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ABSTRACT

Intended for use in training staff concerned with building bridges between the family learning environment and Head Start, this guide broadens the idea of "parents as teachers" beyond the instructional role parents play, by looking at the entire family learning environment. Following an introductory section, the guide presents four training modules. Each module details expected outcomes, key concepts, background information, learning activities, and next steps. Handouts are included for each module. Module one, "Parents Are First Teachers," describes factors affecting children's learning, ways that parents support learning, and how parental beliefs affect how and what children learn. Module two, "Observing Family Learning," describes everyday experiences that contribute to learning, observation techniques to identify elements of supportive family learning environments, and approaches to promoting thinking and learning. Module three, "Supporting Family Learning Goals," describes how to use observation to individualize services and how to use home visits and conferences to support family learning. Module four, "Advocating for Quality Care," identifies factors associated with quality in a child care setting, critically evaluating children's learning environments, and matching family needs and preferences to quality services. The final sections of the guide contain suggested activities and sources for supplemental information that can assist participants in extending learning opportunities. (SD)

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Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community

Supporting Family Learning

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HU[illegible] SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Head Start Bureau

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HEAD START®

Supporting Family Learning

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Head Start Bureau

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Preface

...Claudette tells her children stories at bedtime. She likes to read to them from books but reading has always been hard for her.

...Tomas' grandmother tells him he can go to college when he grows up if he does well in school. Then he can get a good job.

...Malcolm likes to take his stepson James to the park to look for bugs. Then they draw pictures and make up stories about them.

...Chaoun and her husband practice the names of different foods with their children when the family does grocery shopping. They want their children to learn English quickly.

...Jaime watches her mom using a calculator when she's paying the family bills. She can't wait until she's old enough to understand numbers. Her mom explains what she's doing as she goes along.

All of these parents are promoting learning through everyday activities. They are sending important messages to their children about the value of literacy in their everyday lives. Children come to think of themselves as learners as their parents interact with them to impart values, tell stories, ask questions, play games, and relay messages about the world and their place in the world. Every family promotes a learning environment in their own way. Each parent is his or her child's first teacher.

How can Head Start support parents in their critical role of teacher? For Claudette, support came in the form of participation in a family literacy program. Chaoun and her husband are now in an English as a second language program thanks to a Head Start referral. Tomas' grandmother is refreshing her parenting skills with the help of a home visitor. Jaime's mom and Malcolm realized the importance of everyday conversations in language development after their parent-teacher conferences.

Head Start already supports family learning in many different ways. The challenge for programs and staff is to expand and individualize these supports so they are connected to family learning environments and match the goals identified by families themselves. This guide is designed to help staff and parents meet this challenge together as partners.

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Overview

Purpose

The idea of parents as children's first and most important teachers is central to Head Start's philosophy of working with families. For many parents, this idea suggests the skills they formally teach their children (for example, writing their names, tying their shoes). But teaching also occurs informally as part of everyday family activities.

The purpose of this guide is to broaden the idea of "parents as teachers" beyond the instructional role parents play, by looking at the entire family learning environment. In addition, this guide looks at ways programs can support family learning experiences as they naturally occur.

Children come to think about themselves as learners by the ways parents interact with them, the values parents impart, the messages parents offer about the world and their place in the world, the stories told by parents, the questions parents ask, and the games parents play with their children.

Many aspects of the family learning environment are easy to observe, such as: the materials available for promoting literacy or the topics of conversation between family members. However, some aspects of family learning environments can be difficult to observe directly (e.g., attitudes toward learning) and yet are vital in shaping what and how children learn.

This guide rests on the assumption that children's most important learning occurs through shared activities with family members. That being the case, it is imperative that staff members learn to identify, encourage and support learning opportunities that occur in the daily lives of families. Observation can be an invaluable tool for practitioners to use in matching families' interests and needs to learning experiences within the home and beyond.

Audience

This guide has particular relevance for staff making home visits and for teaching staff concerned with building bridges between the family learning environment and Head Start. However, because all staff members have the potential to affect learning that occurs in the home, the training opportunities in this guide can apply to staff in many roles.

Parents are also an audience for this guide, both as organizers of family learning environments and as potential mentors or supporters for other parents. Parents can also play a key role in shaping discussions during workshop activities by providing their perspectives. Finally, staff looking for information and strategies to build their own skills as a parents will find this guide useful.

Performance Standards

This guide contains material which will help programs meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards requiring them to:

- Provide opportunities to increase parents' observation skills and share assessments with staff who plan learning experiences in the program.
- Share with parents staff observations of children and discuss with parents their child's behavior and development.
- Discuss with parents how to create and sustain nurturing, supportive environments in the home and at the program.
- Individualize family partnership agreements that describe family goals, responsibilities, timetables, and strategies for achieving goals (especially related to family literacy) as well as progress in achieving them.
- Provide parent involvement and education activities that are responsive to the ongoing and expressed needs of parents themselves.
- Provide opportunities for parents to enhance their parenting skills, their knowledge and understanding of the educational and developmental needs of their children and share concerns about their children with program staff.
- Provide, either directly or through referrals to other agencies, opportunities for children and families to participate in family literacy services by increasing family access to materials, services, and activities essential to family literacy development.
- Assist parents as adult learners to recognize and address their own literacy goals.
- Conduct staff-parent conferences.

Organization of the Modules

This training guide contains two types of activities: workshop and coaching. In other guides, the coaching activities are similar in content to the workshop only presented to individuals or small groups of participants. However, in this guide the workshop and coaching activities have a unique relationship.

- *Workshops* introduce ideas in a group setting. Ideally, the workshops should include both staff and parents as participants. In these activities, participants practice skills by drawing upon their own life and work experiences.

- *Coaching* activities provide opportunities to put skills gained in the workshops into direct practice. One way adults learn is by applying concepts which they have learned to real-life situations. Another way adults learn is by teaching someone else. Therefore, in coaching activities staff or parents who have participated in a related workshop activity take on the role of coach. As coach, they teach skills to other parents that they, in turn, can use with their children.

  The coaching activities in this guide are not meant to be one-time, stand-alone activities. Rather, they are designed to be repeated at different points in time to yield new information or to reinforce skills.

  Coaching may take several forms: staff may work with another staff member who is a parent, staff may work directly with parents, or parents may work with parents as mentors.

Organization of the Guide

This guide is divided into four modules:

Module 1: Parents are First Teachers. After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Describe factors affecting children's learning.

- Identify ways that parents support children's learning in their everyday activities.

- Identify how parental beliefs about children's learning affect how and what children learn.

Module 2: Observing Family Learning. After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify everyday experiences that contribute to children's learning.
- Use observation techniques to identify elements of supportive family learning environments.
- Identify different approaches to promoting children's thinking and learning.
- Build upon experiences that are fun and enjoyable to foster learning.

Module 3: Supporting Family Learning Goals. After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Use observations to individualize services that support family learning.
- Use home visits and parent-teacher conferences as opportunities to support family learning goals.
- Identify how programs can provide a range of family literacy activities to meet the needs of families.

Module 4: Advocating for Quality Care. After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify the factors they associate with quality in a child care setting.
- Increase advocacy skills by critically evaluating children's learning environments outside the home.
- Increase awareness of community resources in order to support and enrich family learning environments.
- Become better consumers of services by matching family needs and preferences to quality services.

Following each set of activities within a module is a section entitled *Next Steps: Ideas to Extend Practice.* This section outlines several suggestions for activities that are designed to provide participants with opportunities to apply the information and skills learned in the training situation to their everyday lives. These extended learning activities are equally important to the training activities. In order for skills to be a part of everyday use, there must be opportunity for practice and reinforcement over time.

The final sections of the guide, *Continuing Professional Development* and *Resources*, contain suggested activities and sources for supplemental information that can assist participants in extending the learning opportunities begun in this guide.

Activities in this guide coordinate well with those in other Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community such as: *Communicating with Parents*, *Building on Success*, *Language and Literacy: Links to Social Competency and Learning*, *Observing and Recording: Tools for Decision Making*, and *A Design for Family Support*.

Definition of Icons

(To be added)

At a Glance

Module	*Activity*	*Time*	*Materials*
Module 1: Parents are First Teachers	Activity 1-1: Learning About Learning (W)	30-45 min	Playdough, two tables, chairs, familiar children's story, chart paper, markers, tape
	Activity 1-2: How Young Children Learn (C)	30-45 min	Handouts 1 & 2, photos of children
	Activity 1-3: Reflecting on Our Own Learning Environments (W)	45-60 min	Handout 3, chart paper, markers, pens or pencils
	Activity 1-4: Supportive Elements of Family Learning (C)	45-60 min	Handout 4, video, VCR, monitor
Module 2: Observing Family Learning	Activity 2-1: Enriching Language and Problem Solving (W)	30-45 min	Handout 5, paper bags, common household or classroom objects
	Activity 2-2: Listening to Ourselves (C)	varies	Handouts 5, 6 & 7, tape recorder, audio tape, pens
	Activity 2-3: Mediating Messages (W)	45-60 min	Handout 8, chart paper, markers
	Activity 2-4: Children are "Listening" All the Time (C)	varies	Handouts 7 & 9, pens or pencils
	Activity 2-5: Dinner Time at Rosie's (W)	60-75 min	Handout 10, pens or pencils
	Activity 2-6: Observing My Parenting Style (C)	45-60 min	Handouts 7 & 11, crayons, pens, markers, magazines, scissors, glue, other craft items
	Activity 2-7: Learning All the Time (W)	45-60 min	Handout 12, pen, pencils
	Activity 2-8: Learning and Having Fun Together (C)	varies	Handout 13, paper, pens or pencils
	Activity 2-9: Putting it All Together (C)	75-90 min	Handouts 7 & 14, pens, pencils, crayons, markers; tape or glue, chart paper

W = Workshop C = Coaching

Module	Activity	Time	Materials
Module 3: Supporting Family Learning Goals	Activity 3-1: Parent-Teacher Conferences (W)	60-75 min	Handouts 15, 16 & 17, pens or pencils
	Activity 3-2: Planning for Parent-Teacher Conferences (C)	45-60 min	Handouts 14 & 18, pens or pencils
	Activity 3-3: Planning Home Visits Together (W)	60-75 min	Handout 19, video, VCR, monitor
	Activity 3-4: A Five-Step Planning Process (C)	varies	Handouts 20, 21 & 22, samples of parent/child activities
	Activity 3-5: Supporting Family Literacy (W)	60-75 min	Overhead 1, Handout 23, Overhead projector and screen, Post-It™ notes or 3x5 cards, chart paper, markers, tape
	Activity 3-6: Literacy Building Activities (C)	30-45 min	Handout 24, two different colored pens
Module 4: Advocating for Quality Care	Activity 4-1: Defining Quality in Child Care (W)	60-75 min	Handout 25, brochure on quality in child care settings, sticky dots in two colors, chart paper, markers
	Activity 4-2: Considering Child Care Choices (C)	varies	Handout 26, pens or pencils
	Activity 4-3: Locating Resources (W)	45-60 min	Large open room, masking tape, markers, colored paper, chart paper, colored dots
	Activity 4-4: Researching Good Resources (C)	varies	Handout 27, chart paper, markers, pens or pencils

Module 1

Parents Are First Teachers

Outcomes

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Describe factors affecting children's learning.
- Identify ways that parents support children's learning in the context of their everyday activities.
- Identify how parental beliefs about children's learning affect how and what children learn.

Key Concepts

- Children learn by actively engaging with the world and with other people.
- Children's learning and development occur in four domains: physical, emotional, cognitive, and social. These domains are interrelated; for example, putting together a puzzle involves both physical and intellectual (or cognitive) activity. In addition, experiences in one or more domains (such as putting together a puzzle) can influence other domains (for example, success with a puzzle can have a positive influence on one's self-image).
- The home is a powerful center of learning for children. This is because the strong emotional bonds children have with family members strengthens the impact of experiences in the home. Also, the family can be spontaneous and individualize experiences that focus a child's interest.
- Families' beliefs about children and how they learn, and their behaviors based on these beliefs, have long-term effects on children's social competence and long-term school success.

Background Information

When people talk about parents teaching their children, many think of times when parents sit down with their children and show or tell them how to do something. While that type of teaching does occur, much of the learning children experience happens in the course of everyday family interactions and experiences.

The ways parents touch, look at, and talk with their children from earliest infancy affect children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. These patterns also affect how children's brains develop.

Babies are born with 100 billion brain cells. As they begin to experience the world, the cells connect into networks. The connections that are made by the brain in the earliest years of life and are used will become permanent, but other cells will disappear in time. For example, a child who is spoken to and read to has a good chance of developing strong language skills because so many neural connections have been laid in the part of the brain where language is handled. On the other hand, a child who is rarely spoken to or read to may have difficulty mastering language skills because there are insufficient neural connections in that part of the brain.

The quality of a child's experiences within the family also affects the way his or her brain grows and develops. The repeated experiences of daily life — those arousing joy, curiosity, fear, anger or other emotions — will likely have long-term effects on the child's willingness and ability to learn. This is why it is important for parents to look beyond ***what*** they do with their children to ***how*** they do it — to the attitudes and feelings that underlay their actions. For example, if a mother enjoys reading to her child, the child senses this and learns that reading can be a pleasurable experience. However, if a mother feels anxious or distracted while reading to her child, the child may pick up on those feelings of discomfort and infer that reading is an unpleasant task.

Finally, it is important for parents to realize how much they teach their children simply by the behavior they model. A child learns by observing his or her parents in daily life as much as by what the parents try to teach.

Because so much of brain development occurs after birth, in the early years, parents play a vital role as their children's first and most important teachers. Dr. Lilian Katz, a professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois, describes four important areas of learning that are heavily influenced by parents:

- **Skills.** Young children are eager to master skills they see their parents and older siblings doing. While they can't complete tasks with the degree of mastery older family member have, they can develop skills in areas such as: self-help (for example, dressing, brushing teeth, feeding), family life (setting the table, sorting laundry, gardening, cleaning), problem solving (starting to take turns, following rules, negotiating), and literacy (scribbling, storytelling, using pictures to "read"). These skills are fostered and enhanced in the home.

- **Knowledge.** Young children, through their experiences with people and objects, acquire a great deal of knowledge about the world. Children learn very early to name objects and to understand their functions (for example, keys open doors and start cars, dogs bark, cats meow). Children use this background knowledge to approach new learning experiences and to acquire more knowledge. Families are important in expanding a child's understanding of the world.

- **Attitudes about learning.** Children want to do things they see their parents and siblings do. The kinds of activities children see their family members doing and enjoying (such as reading, discussing, or taking on a new task) will greatly influence their motivation to do them also. Children also are influenced by parents' responses to their own efforts to learn. For example, the child who is reprimand after scribbling on the wall learns that scribbling is bad. The same child who is redirected to a piece of paper learns that scribbling is good, but writing on walls is not.

- **Learned feelings.** Closely associated with attitudes, learned feelings are the emotional associations children make with learning. For example, many young children pretend to read, mimicking the voice their parents or teachers use when reading and using pictures to tell the story. A child is more likely to develop feelings of confidence as a reader if adults comment on how much they enjoy the child's reading. Feelings of closeness associated with reading together also contribute to the child's positive feelings toward reading. On the other hand, if a child tries to read a passage and is told, "That's not quite right...let me do it," he or she is likely to associate feelings of inadequacy with attempts at trying new tasks, even when having the skills to do them.

Children acquire from their families skills, knowledge, attitudes, and feelings about themselves as learners. The quality of the home environment in the early years of a child's life has a powerful and long-term impact on later social and academic success. Parents set the stage for their children's learning through the attitudes and beliefs they hold about how and what children should learn. These attitudes and beliefs largely determine how supportive a family learning environment will be.

There is no one way in which parents create a supportive family learning environment. However, certain factors are key. Three factors introduced in this module include:

- *A belief in the child's role, from infancy, as an active partner in his or her development.* The child who has opportunities for hands-on learning will feel more connected to the learning experience.
- *A realistic, in-depth understanding of the child's abilities and interests.* High expectations are important for growth but expectations that are too high or too low diminish the child's confidence. The ability to observe carefully is an important skill for setting appropriate expectations.
- *A recognition of and emphasis on the learning experiences that occur within routine family activities in the home and community.* Included here are: reading to children in ways that actively involve the child, using television appropriately, encouraging the child's active manipulation of a variety of stimulating objects, asking children questions that stimulate thinking and promote verbal problem-solving skills, and having a supportive parenting style (a style that projects confidence in the child as capable and competent).

Head Start staff can help parents recognize the important role they play in their children's growth and development. Staff can also offer support and resources to help parents create effective family learning environments.

Activity 1-1: Learning About Learning (W)

Purpose

This activity will demonstrate for participants that rich learning experiences can strengthen several domains of learning simultaneously. The activity also demonstrates how adults influence what and how children learn through the way they structure the learning environment.

Materials

Playdough; two tables; chairs for participants; a familiar children's story; chart paper; markers; tape.

Trainer Preparation Notes:

It is important to remind participants that the word "child" is used in this guide to mean children within the infant/toddler to preschool range. You may wish to add additional examples during the activity, or include Early Head Start whenever the term Head Start is mentioned, to match participants' needs.

Process

After welcoming participants, set the stage by stating that the activities in this guide focus on the many ways parents are their childrens' first teachers. As a first step in understanding parents influence on children's learning, this activity will focus on **how** children learn.

Ask participants to select one of two tables to sit at for this activity. Begin the activity once they are comfortably seated. Ask participants to think of themselves as learners. Tell them you are an adult who is going to give them a task to complete. Ask them to listen to your directions carefully.

Go first to Table A. Place a supply of playdough on the table and tell the learners that their task is to make anything they want out of the playdough.

Next, go to Table B. Give these learners a supply of playdough and tell them that their task is to illustrate the story of *The Three Little Pigs* (or select another familiar children's story of your choosing). Assign each of the learners at the table a different character or prop (in this case, a pig or a house, etc.) from the story. Tell them that they can only make their assigned story character or prop from the playdough.

Allow 10-15 minutes for participants to complete their tasks, then bring the whole group back together. Ask the participants at Table A to report what it was like to complete their task. For example, was the task easy or difficult for the group to complete? Why? Was it fun? Why? What did they observe about themselves as learners? Record their responses and your observations about their attitudes and feelings on chart paper labeled Table A.

Next, ask the participants at Table B to give a similar report, and write these findings on another piece of chart paper labeled Table B.

When you have heard from both groups, ask participants to reflect for a moment on the similarities and differences between the two learning experiences. Highlight examples where learning was seen as a positive experience. Then ask the group which of the two learning situations (Table A, which was self-directed and learner-centered, or Table B, which was adult-directed) was more engaging for learners and why?

Debriefing

Summarize the activity by highlighting the following points:

Important learning occurs when:

- Children do things that interest them.
- Children are highly involved in an activity or situation.
- The activity that includes forming images, recalling the past, anticipating consequences, and imagining how things could be different.
- Children are given responsibility for their learning.

Children are learning all the time, in everyday situations involving family, friends, and neighbors. Parents are especially important as teachers because they can provide individual attention, know a child's interests, and can turn everyday activities into learning opportunities.

Conclude the activity by stating that the activities in this guide will focus on how parents can create supportive family learning environments and how Head Start staff can actively support parents as teachers.

Activity 1-2: How Young Children Learn (C)

Purpose
This activity illustrates what and how young children can learn through everyday interactions with their families.

Materials

Handout 1: *Learning About Learning*; Handout 2: *Snapshots of Learning*; photos of children and adults engaged in everyday activities at home and in other settings.

Coach Preparation Notes:

Handout 2 presents two photos for participants to analyze. However, you can use the last page of the handout to present additional photos that may be more meaningful to your participants. Use the tips below to select photos for this activity.

- Use several photos. Two to five images are generally enough to spark interesting discussion. If the participants are staff with children of their own or Head Start parents, you may want to use photos of their children and family.
- Use photos that depict children and families at home or in their community. For example, select photos of: an adult reading to a child, children helping with a household task, children in physical play and in quiet play, adults joining in a children's activity, or children engaged in a problem-solving activity or in some type of self-help activity.
- Think about the different ways children learn as you select your photos. Include photos that depict opportunities to learn from other children, from adults, and from being alone with materials. Also select photos that demonstrate opportunities for formal learning and informal learning.
- Include children of different ages who reflect the different cultural contexts and family structures found in participants' programs.

Process

Begin by stating that this coaching activity will focus on how and when young children learn. Explain to participants that you will show them photos of children learning in different situations. Before doing so, use the information contained in the background section or Handout 1: *Learning About Learning* to illustrate four important areas of learning:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Attitudes
- Feelings

Provide participants with a copy of the first page of Handout 2: *Snapshots of Learning*. Ask participants to study the photograph and read the questions and answers provided at the bottom of the page.

Take the questions one at a time and ask participants if there are other examples they would like to add.

Divide participants into pairs. Provide them with a copy of the rest of Handout 2. Tell them their task is to study the photographs provided and answer the questions at the bottom of the handout. Allow 10-15 minutes for this task.

Then ask the group to reconvene. Invite volunteers to share highlights from their pairs' discussion. Note any similarities and differences between pairs' observations of the pictures.

Debriefing

Summarizing the activity using the following points. State that important learning occurs:

- In everyday situations involving family, friends, and neighbors.
- In families because they can provide individual attention, know a child's interests, and are able to do things on the spur of the moment.
- When children do things that interest them.
- When children are highly involved in an activity or situation.
- When children are given responsibility for their learning.
- When adults are actively involved in children's learning by figuring out what the child knows and does not know, and building on a child's interests.

Conclude by stating that the activities in this guide focus on how parents can become more actively involved in their childrens' learning and how Head Start staff can actively support parents as teachers.

Activity 1-3: Reflecting on Our Own Learning Environments (W)

Purpose
Participants will examine some parental beliefs and behaviors that contribute to effective learning environments. They will

reflect on how they put these beliefs and behaviors into practice in their own homes and in their work with families.

Materials

Handout 3: *How Parents Support Children's Learning*; chart paper and markers; pens or pencils.

Process

Begin this activity by using background information to illustrate the following points:

- All parents want their children to be successful.
- Parents provide the foundation for their children's social and academic success.

Continue by stating there is no one magic way parents can ensure that their children will be successful in school and later in life. There are, however, certain beliefs and behaviors that work together to help create supportive family learning environments.

Divide participants into four small discussion groups. Provide each participant with a copy of Handout 3: *How Parents Support Children's Learning*. Assign each group two of the eight principles listed on the handout. Ask them to take notes on their discussion to share with the entire group.

Tell participants their task is to discuss two of the principles listed on Handout 3. Encourage participants to think about how they put these beliefs and behaviors into practice themselves as they read through the handout. Then ask the small groups to discuss the following questions:

> *Why are families so important to children's learning?*
>
> *What strengths do families bring to this role?*
>
> *What challenges might parents face in building strong family learning environments?*
>
> *How can you in your role at Head Start support parents as they create family learning environments?*

Debriefing

Bring the entire group back together. Have each group report the highlights from their discussion.

Conclude the activity by summarizing the following points:

- Every family functions as a family learning environment, regardless of its structure, residence, economic level, or ethnic or cultural background. Powerful learning occurs within families, in daily activities and interactions.

- Because the family learning environment is so influential, every parent is their child's first teacher and continues to be their teacher over time. Each parent brings unique strengths and skills to this role.

- Head Start can help parents recognize the important role they play in their children's growth and development. It also can offer support and resources that parents can use to create effective family learning environments.

Activity 1-4: Supportive Elements of Family Learning(C)

Purpose
Participants will identify ways in which parents promote children's learning through everyday, routine interactions at home.

Materials

Handout 4: *"Our Stories Keep Us Connected;"* Head Start video: *Our Stories Keep Us Connected*; VCR and monitor.

Process

Trainer Preparation Notes:

This activity can be done by observing some or all of the families on the video. If you have less than 40 minutes to do this activity, you may want to limit the amount of time participants watch the video to ensure there is ample discussion time.

Begin by saying that people often speak of parents as teachers but don't always stop and consider what that means.

Introduce the video by stating that it provides an opportunity to see how some Head Start families promote their children's learning. Tell participants they will be watching a video and to observe the many ways that parents serve as their children's teacher.

Provide participants with a copy of Handout 4: *Our Stories Keep Us Connected*. Then list the following questions on chart paper:

> *What hopes and dreams do these families have for their children?*

How do the parents influence their children's learning?

How do the parents support their children's confidence in themselves?

How do the different families use Head Start as a resource?

Tell participants to keep these questions in mind as they watch the tape. Ask if there are any questions. Then show the video.

When the video is finished, review the questions listed on chart paper. Lead a discussion using the posted questions as a guide.

Debriefing

Debrief the activity by making the following points:

- All families have hopes and learning goals for their children.
- What parents believe about their role as "teacher" and how children learn greatly affects the learning that occurs at home.
- Powerful learning occurs in a variety of ways within families in daily activities and interactions.
- Head Start staff can be a valuable support to parents as they make the most of the "teachable" moments of everyday life.

Conclude this activity by stating that the activities in the next module will explore several elements of family learning environments in more depth.

Next Steps

Use other guides in the *Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community* series to expand your understanding of early childhood development. For example, read the background sections in Head Start's *Nurturing Children* and *Enhancing Children's Growth and Development* and try one or more of the coaching activities to practice new skills.

Observe one or more children at play in both a classroom and their home settings and observe how the different environments affect children's learning. Keep a journal of observations and discuss your findings with an experienced teacher.

Select/adapt one or more of the activities from this module for use in a parent workshop (e.g., as part of an orientation meeting with parents new to Head Start). Plan for discussion time after the activity (or activities) to ask parents what they want to learn about in the area of child development.

Show the video *Our Stories Keep Us Connected* at an orientation meeting with Head Start parents, and introduce the parent guide that accompanies the tape as a resource for parents who want to strengthen their role as their child's first teacher.

Expand your understanding of parents as teachers by observing a diversity of parent/child interactions in different settings (e.g., friends, relatives, television families, families at the park, etc.) Keep anecdotal notes on your observations. As you review your notes, look for patterns of ways in which parents communicate messages about the importance of learning to their children.

One evening while watching the television shows normally watched by your family, make note of what skills, knowledge, attitudes and feelings children are learning from these shows.

Make a photograph album of parents and children engaged in activities together to illustrate the wide range of learning that takes place through daily experiences. Place the album in the lending library for families to sign out and "read." Also, purchasing a camera (or invest in disposable camera) for the lending library may encourage parents to keep their own records of their children's learning.

Handout 1: Learning About Learning

The following are four important areas of learning that are heavily influenced by parents and other involved adults:

1. Skills

All preschool children can acquire the following skills:

- Social skills (getting along with others, being in a group)
- Communication skills (expressing oneself, understanding others)
- Motor skills (body control, physical ability)
- Thinking skills (problem solving, memory, comparing and contrasting)

As children become competent in these four skill groups, they become ready to acquire academic (school) skills. It's important to remember that thinking skills are not the same as academic skills. Many parents want their young children to get a head start on academic skills such as reading and math before they go to kindergarten. There is no evidence that children who are taught to read and do math early are better at it over time. In fact, what often happens is that when children work too soon and too much on academic skills, they can lose their curiosity and motivation.

Therefore, just because a child can learn a skill at a young age doesn't mean he or she should learn it. Earlier is not better in many areas. The best measure of whether children are ready to learn new skills is their enthusiasm, motivation, and persistence to learn.

2. Knowledge

Young children, through their experiences with people and objects, acquire a great deal of knowledge about the world. Children learn very early to name objects and to understand their functions (for example, keys open doors and start cars, dogs bark, cats meow). Children use this background knowledge to approach new learning experiences and to acquire more knowledge. Families are important in expanding a child's understanding of the world.

Many people disagree about what knowledge and skills children should learn during the preschool years. A good rule of thumb for judging what is most appropriate for young children is to ask: *What knowledge helps them make better sense of their own experiences and environment?*

When children are presented with knowledge that is "over their heads," they may become confused or they may learn to hide their questions and doubts in order to appear as though they know more than they do.

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Handout 1: Learning About Learning (Continued)

3. Attitudes about Learning

Attitudes about learning are often adopted from role models, particularly parents and other primary caregivers. The child observes how adults handle learning tasks or approach opportunities to learn, and imitates this behavior.

The habits of learning a person acquires as a child may well remain for a lifetime. Therefore, parents play a critical role in modeling effective learning habits.

Adults also play a key role in making opportunities available for children to practice effective learning habits, such as:

- Acting on their curiosity
- Inventiveness
- Cooperativeness
- Persistence in doing tasks

4. Feelings

Learned feelings are the emotional associations children make with learning. Parents cannot teach feelings to a child. However, their attitudes and behaviors toward the child can strongly affect the feelings that a child acquires.

Children who have positive feelings about learning obviously are more willing to take the risks that learning requires. A child's feelings about himself or herself also affect the ability to learn. For learning to happen, a child needs to:

- Feel comfortable with some people outside the immediate family and away from home.
- Feel confident.
- Feel generally accepted by other children.

Summarized from the work of Lilian Katz, professor of early childhood education at the University of Illinois

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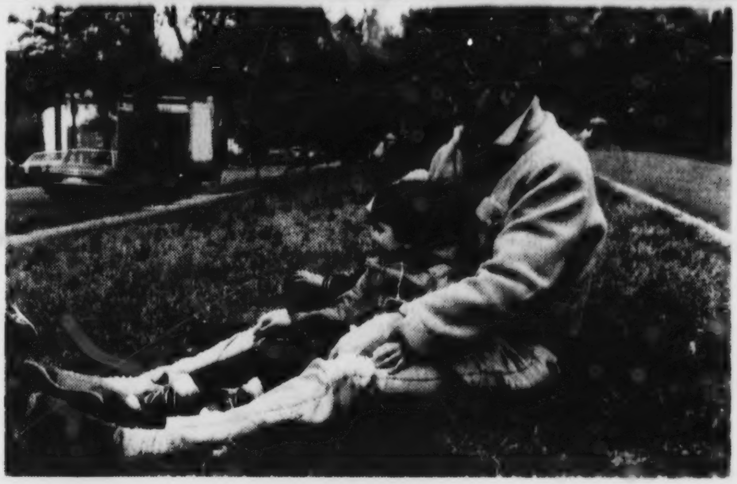
Handout 2: Snapshots of Learning



What skills do you think the child is learning here?

- ☐ Colors and names of cars.
- ☐ Functions of trucks.
- ☐ Words to songs.
- ☐ Taking turns in conversation.
- ☐ Categorizing (size and color of objects and creatures).

What knowledge is the child learning about the world?

- ☐ Green grass is soft and brown grass is scratchy.
- ☐ His father's shoes are bigger than his.
- ☐ When he grows up, his shoes will be as big as his father's.
- ☐ Cars and trucks drive on the road, people walk on sidewalks.
- ☐ Ants live in holes in the ground.
- ☐ Sometimes you can get ice cream from the ice cream truck and sometimes you can't.

What feelings or attitudes is the child possibly developing about himself as a learner?

- ☐ He's a good singer.
- ☐ His father will help him learn new things.
- ☐ The world is an interesting place that he can discover.
- ☐ He has interesting things to say.
- ☐ It's fun to see new things.

What role does the father play in his child's learning?

- ☐ He is making the child relaxed and open to observation.
- ☐ He is encouraging his son's curiosity.
- ☐ He is helping his child feel loved, competent, and capable.

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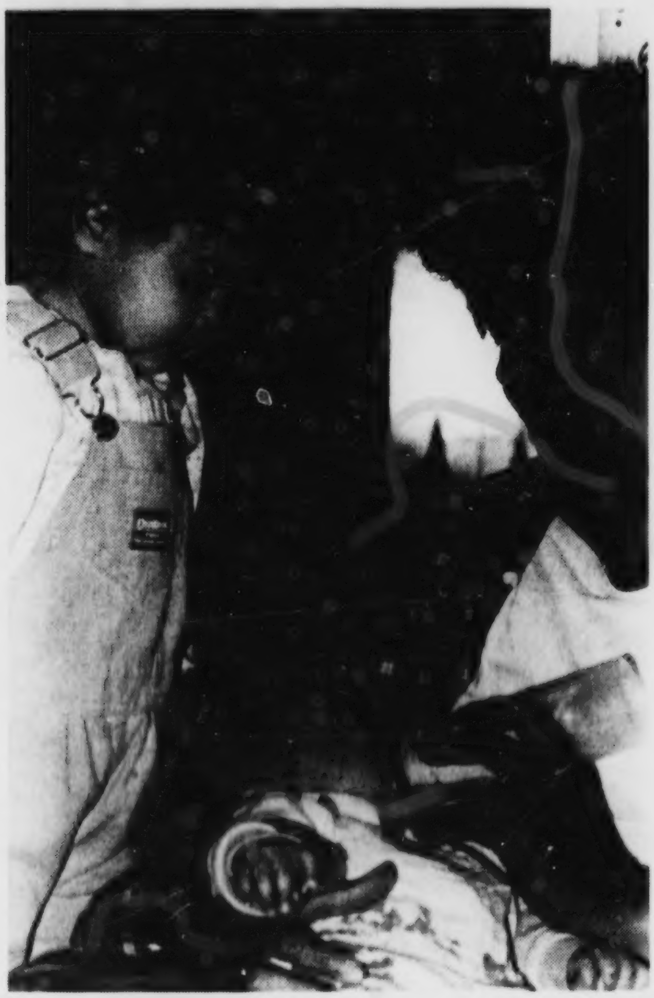
Handout 2: Snapshots of Learning (Continued)



- ☐ What skills do you think the children are learning here?
- ☐ What knowledge are they learning about the world?
- ☐ What feelings or attitudes are they possibly developing about themselves as learners?
- ☐ What role does the mother play in her children's learning?

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Handout 2: Snapshots of Learning (Continued)

☐ What skills do you think the child is learning here?

☐ What knowledge is the child learning about the world?

☐ What attitudes or feelings is the child possibly developing about himself or herself as a learner?

☐ What role do adults play in the child's learning?

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Handout 3: How Parents Support Children's Learning

Research suggests that the home environment has a powerful and long-term impact on children's life-long learning. Parents set the stage for children's learning through the beliefs they hold and the ways they behave. There are many ways parents can create a supportive family learning environment. However, the following beliefs and behaviors are important:

1. **Parents understand that children grow and develop when they are actively involved in interesting activities.**

   This means:
   ... Noticing the difference between how much a child can do independently and with adult assistance.

   ... Building upon the child's initiations rather than always being the one in charge, even when to do so takes more time.

   ... Noticing how babies and children engage people verbally and nonverbally and how they initiate play.

   ... Noticing how babies and children make and keep things interesting (i.e., by observing what a child does with toys, objects, or people to keep engaged).

2. **Parents recognize and understand their child's abilities and interests.**

   This means:
   ... Learning what most children do at certain ages to help form reasonable expectations.

   ... Learning about child development by talking with the child's doctor, teacher, caregiver, or other parents.

   ... Taking a parenting class, watching a video or reading a book on the subject.

   ... Observing children.

   ... Trying not to compare children in the same family. As similar as children's experiences can be within a family, each child is unique.

   ... Letting children try new things when they are ready. It may be messy to let a toddler drink from a sippy-cup or let a child peel a banana but with support, they can master new skills and gain confidence.

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Handout 3: How Parents Support Children's Learning (Continued)

3. Parents recognize and emphasize literacy experiences that occur within routine family activities in the home or community.

This means:

... Reading, telling stories, and singing to children.

... Taking children to the public library.

... Including everyone in family discussions at mealtime rather than having separate conversations going on at the same time.

... Making the most of time spent on buses or in cars through interactive conversation.

... Looking for opportunities to build math and science literacy, (looking at the stars and talking about them, sorting laundry, counting the stairs as you go up, etc.).

4. Parents read to children in a way that actively involves the child.

This means:

... "Reading" picture books to babies by naming objects on the page.

... Letting toddlers or younger children hold the book, turn pages and point to pictures.

... Having children use pictures to tell the story.

... Leaving off the last word in rhyming books and letting the child say it.

... Letting children pick out the books and reading the same one over and over if that's their choice.

... Asking questions about what might happen next when you come to an exciting part.

... Letting children take turns reading or saying lines or parts of the story when they are beginning to read themselves or if they have memorized the book.

Handout 3: How Parents Support Children's Learning (Continued)

5. Parents use television appropriately.

This means:

... Knowing what children are watching on television.

... Choosing shows that reflect the family's values. Letting children choose shows from the ones parents approve.

... Watching television with children and noticing what they like, what makes them laugh, as well as what is frightening or troubling.

... Not assuming children understand what they see and hear (and not assuming they ***don't*** understand either).

... Asking questions and answering theirs about what is being viewed.

... Relating the stories they see on television to their own lives.

... Commenting on scenes you as an adult are uncomfortable having your child see ("There is a lot of hurting in this show, isn't there?" "Some people think it is OK to use language like that with their friends--What do you think?")

... Setting limits on television viewing.

... Providing alternative pastimes to television.

6. Parents provide opportunities for children to actively explore their world.

This means:

... Pointing out features of the natural world when playing outside ("Look there's a caterpillar on that branch!").

... Child-proofing your living space so children can explore freely and touch the objects within reach.

... Including children in adult activities to the degree possible. While cooking, for example, giving children their own wooden spoon and pan to either bang or pretend.

Handout 3: How Parents Support Children's Learning (Continued)

... When buying toys, choosing ones that can be used in several ways. Action figures about TV characters, for example, will be used almost exclusively to play those roles while toys like Legos™ or art materials can stimulate many creative uses.

... Talking with Head Start staff about making toys from ordinary materials found in most homes.

7. Parents ask children questions that help them think.

This means asking questions that require children to:

... Compare one thing with another ("How is the video different from the book we read?"; "Which book fits in the busy box?").

... Recall and describe events by asking questions about what's happened ("What did you do at the picnic?").

... Explain how they feel about something that has happened (e.g., "How did you feel today when the fire alarm went off at Head Start?").

... Explain a point of view and why they think the way they do ("Why do you think Henri crossed the street alone when his grandmother said not to do that?").

... Repeat what has been talked about ("Do you mean that.....?") or for pre-verbal children, talk about what you're doing ("We're putting your boots on aren't we?")

8. Parents have the tools they need to feel good about themselves as parents.

This means:

... Finding other parents who support their values in parenting, and talking often.

... Responding to children's needs as quickly as they can. It teaches children to trust that people care.

... Using or learning positive discipline strategies. Head Start staff can help.

... Giving themselves a "time out" when they are getting irritable, even if it means turning their backs for a minute and counting to ten.

... Finding times to do fun, enjoyable things together, if only for a few minutes.

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Handout 4: Our Stories Keep Us Connected

In the video *Our Stories Keep Us Connected*, you will meet several Head Start families. As you watch this video, observe how parents interact with their children. Listen carefully to what parents have to say about being a teacher and about the importance of children's learning. Use the questions below to help you organize your observations and thoughts. You may want to watch the video more than once.

✱ What hopes and dreams do these families have for their children?

✱ How do the parents influence their children's learning?

✱ How do the parents support their children's confidence in themselves?

✱ How do the different families use Head Start as a resource?

Observing Family Learning

Outcomes

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify everyday experiences that contribute to children's learning.
- Use observation techniques to identify elements of supportive family learning environments.
- Identify different approaches to promoting children's thinking and learning.
- Build upon experiences that are fun and enjoyable to foster learning.

Key Concepts

- Children are active contributors to their own knowledge and skills. When adults encourage children through their questions to build upon what they already know, they foster learning.
- Parents influence children's learning directly through what they say and do. Parents also influence children's learning indirectly through the influences they allow into their homes (media, visitors, printed materials, etc.) and the way they organize family time (e.g., regularity of mealtime, bedtimes).
- A supportive parenting style is also part of a home-learning environment. A parenting style is "supportive" if it enables the child to build self-confidence and feel capable of learning. Parenting styles differ from family to family because each person is unique and each situation is different. Thus, there are many different styles of parenting styles that are "supportive."
- Parents each bring their own unique strengths to their roles as the organizers of their family learning environments. Head Start staff can play an important role in helping parents identify their own strengths and support parents as they define goals for change.

Background Information

Parents guide many aspects of their children's lives — from what they eat to where they go, from how they dress to whom they play with. All of these affect children's learning. In this module, activities will focus on observing parent-child interactions and identifying ways these interactions set the stage for lifelong learning. The module is based on the assumption that through careful observation of what happens naturally, parents and staff can become more mindful of their roles in creating rich learning environments for children.

Children are learning all the time. Adults play an important role in helping children focus their learning on ideas and behaviors that support social and cognitive competence. While the importance of parents as teachers cannot be under-estimated, it is also true that parents are busy and do not always have the time and energy to engage in formal learning activities with their children. However, in the context of daily living, parents can make use of countless opportunities to challenge children's thinking, clarify ideas that don't make sense, convey beliefs and values, and have fun.

There are many ways parents can help their children learn, but for the purposes of this guide, we will focus on four aspects of family learning: family conversations, specifically asking good questions; mediating messages; supportive parenting styles; and learning through everyday activities. These four categories of learning are not inclusive but were chosen as the focus of this module because researchers have found strong links between parenting behaviors in these areas and children's competence. Participants are encouraged to think of these aspects of family learning as parts of a whole. Each can be examined individually, but in real life they overlap, often happening at the same time.

Family Conversations (specifically, asking good questions)
Children learn from the talking that goes on around them. This is why families are so important to a child's language development. When parents coo and babble to their infants, they are actually helping the babies learn about being partners in communication. If you watch a parent and young infant even at four months of age, you will see clear evidence of turn-taking as each makes sounds and faces to the other. Just as important, the face-to-face contact between parent and infant in conversation helps to build the sense of security that a child must have in order to learn.

As children get older, the language they hear from their families helps them learn how to behave and gives meaning to the rich world around them. Children learn by imitation, and family members are the models they use for learning how to speak and the patterns of conversation.

In many families, the conversations at mealtime offer an ideal opportunity for children to develop thinking and language skills. Children hear new vocabulary and are encouraged to answer questions and to speculate about past and future events. They also have opportunity to practice their narrative skills (their ability to tell a story or report an event). Children who participate in family mealtime conversations have more advanced language development upon entering school than children who don't.

However, it is not always possible for families to eat together. Conflicting schedules and responsibilities often interfere with relaxed mealtimes. Fortunately, it is not the mealtime that promotes thinking and language skills, but rather the experience of participating in a discussion with more knowledgeable partners, where everyone's opinion is valued and expression is encouraged. Families that cannot eat together can find time in their day for the conversations that are so helpful to children's language development.

Along with casual conversation, there is something else that family members do to help children gain language skills. This something is posing questions, also called *inquiry*. Children's language skills are encouraged when they are asked questions. Cognitive skills also are developed through open-ended questions that require more than a one word answer. The question, "Did you have a good time on the playground today?" requires only that the child answer yes or no. By contrast, the open-ended question, "What happened on the playground today?" requires the child to recall and sequence events. This requires more thinking. Through repeated use of thinking and speaking skills, children forge the networks of brain cells that enable them to become good communicators.

Mediating Messages

Preschool-aged children absorb information from the people around them and the experiences they have. However, they cannot always make sense of it. They may have difficulty telling the difference between what is real and what is pretend, a good idea and a bad one, or an appropriate response and one that brings negative consequences. Adults play a critical role as *mediator* by explaining, interpreting, or countering confusing messages that children hear and see.

Since parents are their children's first teachers, they are also their first mediators. Children receive a variety of messages from immediate family and from their own daily experiences, but they also receive a constant flow of messages from other sources, especially:

- the media, particularly television, which offers thousands of images and words every day about what people believe, how they act, and what they should buy, and
- other people around the family, who bring ideas, beliefs, and points of view, all of which may or may not support the family's beliefs and attitudes.

Mediating can be a time-consuming role for parents to fill because it requires constant monitoring of what children observe and hear and with whom they spend their time. It requires parents to think of ways to:

- Point out the contrast to a message, if the contrast is a better idea.
- Reinforce messages which they accept.
- Interpret confusing concepts in a way children can understand and use.
- Counter messages that they feel aren't appropriate for their children.

Parents act as mediators in many different ways. They answer questions. They translate confusing ideas into language the child can understand. They explain things that don't make sense. They provide their opinions and judgments. The conversations that take place when parents mediate for their children help the children develop thinking skills and communications skills. They help the children develop concepts, vocabulary, an understanding of the world, and a set of values by which to interpret the world.

Supportive Parenting Styles

A supportive parenting style contributes to children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Elements of supportive parenting vary from family to family and are influenced by culture and experience. This is to say that there is **no one style** of supportive parenting. Every person has a unique history that influences how he or she behaves when becoming a parent. Whatever the style, it is "supportive" if it enables the child to build self-confidence and feel capable of learning.

A supportive parenting style requires a knowledge of child development and the skills to apply this knowledge in dealings with an individual child. Attitude and values are equally important, however. It can be said that parenting begins in the heart, not the head. For example, persons who believe that "children should be seen and not heard" may find it difficult to encourage conversations with their children, even if they are objectively aware of the importance of talk to a child's language development.

A supportive parenting style by definition nurtures, protects and feeds the child's developing sense of self. One important way that parents learn how to nurture is through the nurturing they received as children. Parents who were not adequately nurtured as children may have to learn how to nurture. For all parents, it is important that they continue to nurture themselves — to meet their own needs — in order to have the energy, patience, and strength to meet the learning needs of their children.

Another way that parents apply their style is through the expectations they hold for their children. These can either inspire confidence and trust in children or inhibit and discourage them. According to child development expert T. Barry Brazleton, expectations of success or failure are formed in babies as young as eight months old. Parents with a supportive style set expectations based on a knowledge of what children are capable of understanding and mastering at each stage. For example, a supportive parent, who knows that learning begins in infancy, will talk to a baby. That parent accepts the infant's coos, smiles, and waving arms as a form of communicating back. When this parent responds positively to the infant's efforts to communicate, that infant is rewarded and thus is willing to continue developing those skills.

Parents with a supportive style also set expectations based on an understanding of the individual child. For example, a parent may realize that a sensitive baby prefers being talked to in a soft and unexcited manner. That parent also may realize that an outgoing baby prefers more energetic conversation.

One way that parents apply their style is through the rules they make. All parents make rules. They do so to keep their children safe, to protect others and their belongings, to help their children be accepted by the community, and sometimes simply for convenience in day-to-day living. However, just because parents develop good rules does not mean children will follow them. A supportive parenting style, therefore, is one that finds ways to develop rules so that children can and will obey them.

Preschoolers can make a distinction between rules that protect them from harm or that are very important to the parent, and rules that are for convenience. In other words, a preschooler can understand that some rules are not negotiable, but some are. The preschooler can understand that some rules cannot be broken, but some — with the parent's permission — sometimes can. Parents who realize this allow themselves to be flexible. They are firm about the rules that are important to safety, values, and beliefs, and they are more relaxed about the rest. For example, a parent might insist that a child go to bed by 8:00 p.m. in order to get a good night's sleep for school, but allow the child to stay up a little extra on weekends. Or, a parent can insist that a child wear clean clothes to school, but permit the child to select those clothes.

A supportive parenting style helps children understand the purpose of rules so that they come to understand why they must be obeyed. In turn, this helps the children develop thinking and social skills. Specifically, parents help their children's learning by:

- Allowing children to participate as much as possible in rule setting.
- Encouraging children to take responsibility for their actions and help other family members do so, too.
- Allowing children the freedom to make safe mistakes (where injury or harm won't occur) and to learn by themselves why it is important to follow certain rules or conventions.
- Supporting children in resolving conflict among themselves.

A note of caustion. In discussing supportive parenting styles, it is important to stress that while parenting styles are culturally influenced, not all practices are nurturing and safe for children. Whenever a staff member is uncomfortable with the way in which parents interact with their children, they should check out their observations with their supervisors to determine if there is cause for concern for the child's safety.

Learning Through Everyday Activities
The questions parents pose promote language, but they also encourage children's early thinking about science, math, moral development, and how society functions. We hear a great deal about how important early literacy experiences are to later success in reading and writing. In fact, there are many forms of *learning* that take place *through everyday activities*. Parents promote math literacy when they help children make comparisons between objects, count socks, or classify groceries ("cans go on the shelf, fruits on the counter"). Helping children become careful observers of the world around them, asking good questions, and responding to their questions all promote science literacy. Of course, reading to children in active ways and monitoring what they watch on television are also ways to promote thinking.

One of the most important things parents can do to strengthen their children's natural curiosity in the world around them is to create learning environments that encourage children to ask questions, explore, and want to learn more. This is done by giving children safe places to play and simple age-appropriate toys that stimulate their curiosity. Simply having good toys, books or educational videos at home are not enough to create a good learning environment, however. The attitude parents convey about learning, the way they talk with children about what they are doing and watching, and the opportunities they explore for learning more about the world set the stage for children's lifelong learning.

In conclusion, because Head Start serves families with young children, it has a particularly important role in promoting learning within the family. Points to remember are:

- The values which young children bring to the activity of reading are formed before they enter elementary school. Parents are the most important influence upon these values. Head Start provides a setting for parents of young children to reflect upon their attitudes and values and to learn how parenting style influences children's learning.

- For parents in the program, Head Start is an important source of information on child development. Moreover, staff can work with parents individually to help them apply the information in ways that work for their particular family.

- Children are best able to develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively when they are nurtured. Head Start provides a range of opportunities for parents to build the self-confidence necessary to be strong nurturers.

- Parents want to do the best they can for their children. Thus, parents are highly motivated to take on the challenges of learning new skills and behaviors themselves, when they realize how their children benefit. Head Start is in the position not only to provide parents with formal learning programs, but also to direct them to the learning opportunities that occur in everyday family activities.

Trainer Preparation Notes:
There are many dimensions of rich verbal environments. For more information about promoting language and literacy, refer to the training guide: *Language and Literacy: Links to Social Competence and Learning*, and *Observing and Recording: Tools for Decision Making*.

Activity 2-1: Enriching Language and Problem Solving (W)

Purpose
In this activity, participants will contrast the use of simple commands and closed questions with descriptive language and open-ended questions, to heighten awareness of how language affects problem solving ability.

Materials

Handout 5: *Talking With Your Child*; paper bags, common household or classroom objects.

Process

Set the stage for this activity by stressing the importance of a rich verbal environment for children's learning. For many young children, their verbal environment is primarily the family setting. A child's language development is affected by how conversation takes place within the family and how the child is included in the conversation.

One important way verbal environments affect children's language development is through the use of questions. The value of questions rests with the process of thinking about an answer. Some questions encourage children (or adults) to analyze, organize ideas, and compare possibilities, thus strengthening problem solving abilities.

In this activity, the value of two key types of questions will be examined:

- *Closed questions*. These questions require only a simple one-word answer such as "yes" or "no."
- *Open-ended questions*. These "thinking" questions require children to compare ideas or objects, make inferences about what is happening, or consider the characteristics of something.

Ask participants to select a partner and give one person in each pair a paper bag containing a common everyday item (e.g., kitchen utensil, article of clothing, child's toy). Tell the person holding the bag (person A) that they may look inside at the object but they must keep it hidden from their partner (person B) and others in the room.

The object of the activity is for person B to guess what is in the bag. Explain that person B may only ask their partner three closed questions, that is, questions requiring a one-word answer such as "yes" or "no," before trying to guess what is in the bag. For example, is the object made of paper? Allow 3-5 minutes for the guessing.

Then ask person A to exchange their bag with that of another person. Explain that the object of the activity is once again for person B to guess what is in the bag. This time, person B can ask up to three open-ended questions. Allow 3-5 minutes for this part of the activity.

When the pairs have finished, reconvene the group.

Lead a discussion using the following questions as a guide:

- What are some of the benefits of using open-ended questions for seeking information?
- How did the use of open-ended questions affect the thinking skills of those providing the answers (i.e., person A)?
- How might you use open-ended questions in your work? With children? With parents? With staff?

Debriefing

Make the following points in debriefing the activity:

- Questions are a central part of everyday life. They can be a powerful tool for strengthening important thinking skills such as problem-solving.

- Learning is promoted when questions are asked in beneficial ways. Questions that invite children (or adults) to sort through, organize and share information are especially helpful.

Conclude the activity by stating that one way Head Start staff can support parents in the role of teachers is to help them become more aware of the way in which they ask children questions. Refer participants to Handout 5: *Talking With Your Child*. Ask participants to consider how they could model this information for parents or how they could incorporate it into a parent training, home visit, or parent meeting.

Activity 2-2: Listening to Ourselves (C)

Purpose

In this activity participants will reflect upon their own conversation patterns with children as well as practice listening and observation skills. In addition, participants will discriminate between types of questions, noting the differences in children's responses to the questions they ask.

Materials

Handout 5: *Talking With Your Child*; Handout 6: *Listening Coding Sheet*; Handout 7: *Journal Notes*; tape recorder and audio tape; pens. If tape recorders are not available, a friend, family member, or Head Start staff member can act as notetaker to the conversation.

Coach's Preparation Notes:

Encourage staff members you are coaching to do this activity with one of their own children or with a child who frequently visits their home. Offer parents you are coaching the choice of doing this activity with just one of their children or several of their children together.

It is important for participants to feel at ease both in recording conversations and in the use of the coding sheet. You may want to consider conducting one or more "practice" taping and coding sessions to help participants become comfortable with the activity. Or, you may want to tape a conversation between another adult and a child to use as a demonstration.

Process

Begin the activity by talking about the importance of rich verbal environments for children's development. Talk about the many things children learn from talking with family members and listening to family conversations. Tell participants that this activity will focus on one element in the verbal environment: the use of "inquiry" or asking questions. The questions parents ask and the way they ask them has been found to relate to children's thinking skills and later school achievement.

Distribute Handout 5: *Talking With Your Child* and review the difference between open-ended and closed questions. Then distribute Handout 6: *Listening Coding Sheet*, and review the instructions.

Provide participants with portable tape recorders and explain how to use them to record conversations. Direct participants to record themselves for 10 minutes during which they are involved in a task with a child (getting dressed, preparing a meal, eating, cleaning up, etc.).

Have participants listen to their tapes from beginning to end. Then have them listen to the tapes again, this time recording the number of times they used closed and open-ended questions. Encourage participants to listen and observe at their own pace, stopping the tape whenever they want.

Have participants rewind their tapes and listen a third time, this time to record the kinds of responses their children made to closed and open-ended questions.

Debriefing

Have participants share what they learned from listening to their own conversations with their children. Ask:

> *What did you learn about how you and your child communicate?*
>
> *When does it make sense to ask a closed question? When is an open-ended question more appropriate?*
>
> *Other than questioning, what else did you observe about the verbal environment of your child at home?*
>
> *Did you learn anything from this activity that you might be able to apply in your own family or in your work with other families?*

Make a plan with the participants for how and when they might use this listening technique to observe other conversations. Provide them with extra copies of Handout 6.

Finally, distribute Handout 7: *Journal Notes*. Direct participants to use this handout to record their reflections after each coaching activity in this module.

Activity 2-3: Mediating Messages (W)

Purpose
In this activity, participants will practice techniques for helping children interpret and evaluate the information they receive.

Materials

Handout 8: *Mediating Messages*; chart paper and markers.

Process

Begin this activity by stating that children are influenced by information that comes to them from a variety of people — family members, children, and other adults. They also receive a constant flow of information from other sources, especially:

- The *media*, particularly television, which offers thousands of images and words every day about what people believe, how they act, and what they should buy.
- *Other people* around the family, who bring ideas, beliefs, and points of view (stemming from culture, religion, politics, and experiences).

The information children receive from these outside sources may or may not be understandable by them nor does it necessarily support the family's beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, one of the roles of parents is to help children interpret and evaluate the information they receive — to "mediate the messages." Mediating is difficult because it requires constant monitoring of what children watch and hear and with whom they spend their time. It also requires adults to recognize when messages are confusing to children and find ways to help them understand what they see and hear.

Parents and staff have the opportunity, as they clarify confusing or questionable messages, to strengthen messages they want children to internalize about themselves and their world. Mediating then becomes a two-pronged process: clarifying confusing or non-supportive messages, and strengthening or reinforcing messages that reflect the family's or community's beliefs and values.

Divide the group into small working groups and distribute Handout 8: *Mediating Messages*.

Ask each group to select one (or more) of the examples on Handout 8 to discuss, using the following questions as a guide:

- What "message" might the child be receiving in this situation? How might that message be affecting the child's view of the world around him or her?
- How do you think the adult feels about the message?
- How might the adult in the situation "mediate" the message the child is receiving? That is, how might the adult reinforce the understanding he or she wants the child to take from a given situation?

Reconvene the group. Have a representative from each group share a summary of their groups' discussion.

Debriefing

Summarize the activity by making the following points:

- Putting energy into becoming a good mediator is hard work, but it can have long-term benefits for children.
- Children recognize that their parents are protecting and nurturing them. As a consequence, children develop trust in their parents and respect for their parents' judgments.
- Children learn that not everything they hear is valid, that ideas do not all have equal value, and that some information is simply incorrect.
- By imitation, children learn how to mediate which means they learn how to evaluate and judge information for themselves.

Conclude the activity by asking participants to consider how they can support parents in their roles as mediator. Have them identify specific ways they could share information about mediating to parents.

Activity 2-4: Children are "Listening" All the Time (C)

Purpose
Participants will observe how children can be affected by outside influences, in particular, television.

Materials

Handout 7: *Journal Notes*; Handout 9: *Mixed Messages*; pens or pencils.

Process

Coach Preparation Notes:
Encourage staff members you are coaching to do this activity with their own children or with a child who frequently visits their home. Offer parents you are coaching the choice of doing this with just one of their children or several of their children together. Also explain to participants that the purpose of this activity is not to encourage the use of television but an example of how to mediate messages.

Explain to participants that while parents are children's most important teachers, children are affected by everyone with whom they come in contact. Teachers and caregivers, other family members, friends, neighbors, family visitors, and others all can influence how children act, speak, and think. So too, do less personal influences such as TV characters, celebrities, popular singers, and story characters.

Provide participants with copies of Handout 9: *Mixed Messages*. Ask participants to begin this activity by identifying a "message" — a belief or value — they hope their children will be exposed to often enough for it to become one of their values.

For example:

- Treat others how you want to be treated.
- Violence never solves problems.
- Eating right helps to keep you healthy.

Together you may want to brainstorm several messages before each participant selects one. Then direct participants to find a time when their children are watching television, and to watch it with them. They should use Handout 9 to record when the television program — including commercials — is supporting or opposing the message they have selected.

Coach Preparation Notes:
You may want to practice this activity together first. Introduce the message to be used for this practice session, then show a videotape of a television program. Have participants note aloud when the programming supports or opposes the message.

Debriefing

Have participants describe the program they watched and how it supported or opposed their message. Ask:

> *Were there any other messages you observed that surprised you?*
>
> *Before this activity, how did you feel about your children watching that program? Has your opinion changed? Why?*
>
> *When your children watch that program again, do you think you will want to mediate the messages it is sending? Why?*
>
> *What assistance can you use from Head Start to develop your mediating skills?*

Remind participants of the following points:

- Children learn from the actions and words of people they see regularly--whether or not those words and actions are meant for them.
- One of the ways parents can affect their children's behavior and attitudes is to monitor the influences they allow in their homes.

Lead a discussion of how this activity could be used to evaluate other influences in and around the home besides television. Also discuss how staff could use this mediating exercise in their work with families.

Finally, remind participants to record their thoughts about this activity on Handout 7.

Activity 2-5: Dinner Time at Rosie's (W)

Purpose
Participants will examine how parenting style affects family harmony. They also will explore ways that Head Start staff can help parents make changes to their parenting style in order to reduce family conflict.

Materials

Handout 10: *Dinner Time at Rosie's*; pens or pencils.

Process

Introduce the activity by noting that all families have conflicts occasionally. However, sometimes families fall into the same kinds of conflict over and over. Repeated "power struggles" can be negative learning experiences for children. In many cases, however, parents can make changes to their parenting style which enable them to turn conflicts into positive learning experiences.

Note that, as in any family experience, children learn from conflict. They learn:

- How important they are.
- The effect of their behavior on others.
- What to expect from others.

Tell participants that you are going to read them two stories as examples of how children learn from conflict. Read the first story:

A mother is standing at the kitchen counter trying to find a bill she needs to pay. Her four-year old daughter is sitting on the floor near her mother's feet working on a puzzle. She is getting frustrated and calls out to her mother to help her...now! The mother continues to sort through piles of paper but leans over and says, "Look for the edge pieces first." The child tries again, but becomes more frustrated. The mother replies, "I'll help you when I find this important paper, but I can't help right now." The child angrily throws the puzzle, scattering the pieces. The mother leans down to comfort her daughter. "That puzzle is just too hard and Mama is just too busy," she says "We'll do it together in a few minutes. Can you help me clean up this mess so I can find my paper?" The child nods, smiles, and begins to help her mother.

Ask participants what this child is learning from the conflict. Write the responses on chart paper. Responses could include learning:

- About the importance of helping and being helped.
- About cooperation.
- That she can listen and be listened to.
- That her feelings can be understood.
- That conflicts can be resolved.

Then note that parents also learn from conflict. Ask participants what this mother is learning. Responses could include learning:

- About her child's determination.

- That her own stress affects her child.
- That she can resolve conflict.

Next, read the second story to participants:

*A mother is standing at the kitchen counter trying to find a bill she needs to pay. Her four-year old daughter is sitting on the floor near her mother's feet working on a puzzle. She is getting frustrated and calls out to her mother to help her...now! "I'm too busy now, I'll help you later," the mother replies. The child's frustration increases and she becomes more demanding. The mother looks down and says, "That's your brothers puzzle. It's too hard for you. Find something you can do yourself." The child wants this puzzle, though. She tries again briefly before throwing the puzzle in frustration, scattering the pieces all over the floor. The mother turns to her and says in an angry voice, "You know better than to throw things. If you can't care for toys, you can't have any. I'm going to put this puzzle away or better yet, give it to someone who will take care of it." The child begins to cry. The mother shouts, "If you keep crying, you can just go to your room. I don't want to hear it!" The child screams louder, runs to her room, and slams the door.***

Ask participants what this child is learning from the conflict. Responses could include:

- That her needs are not important.
- That she is not capable.
- That her feelings are not understood.
- That other's needs always come first.
- That others will not help her.
- That having bad feelings lead to punishment.

Then ask participants what the mother is learning from the conflict. Responses could include:

- That her child is not capable of playing with her brother's toys.

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*Scenarios adapted from *Heart Start*: *The Emotional Foundations of School Readiness* (1992) with permission from ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, Washington, D.C.

- That her child has a bad temper and is uncooperative.
- That her child's strong emotions make her (the mother) angry and resentful.
- That she cannot control conflict.

Ask participants:

- How might you expect each mother and child to behave the next time they have a conflict?
- What happens when we fall into patterns of behavior?
- How do these patterns affect children's behavior in relationships outside the family?
- How can Head Start staff help families analyze their behavior patterns and take steps to adopt more positive patterns?

Tell participants that they are going to examine these questions more deeply using another story about a family.

Distribute Handout 10: *Dinner Time at Rosie's*. Divide participants into small groups. Ask them to read the story with the following questions in mind:

- What are the children learning?
- What is Rosie learning?
- What behavior patterns are contributing to conflict?
- How can Rosie change her behavior or actions to reduce the conflict?
- How can Head Start staff support Rosie in recognizing and managing stress?

Allow 20-25 minutes for groups to discuss the story.

Reconvene the group and ask representatives from each small group to share the main points of their discussions.

Debriefing

Conclude by making the following points:

- The way that families resolve conflict affects children's later relationships.
- There is no one way to parent effectively. Parents must find their own styles of interacting with their children that strengthen everyone's sense of dignity and competence.
- Every family has patterns of behavior, but some are helpful and some are not. When parents and children are stuck in no-win ways of trying to influence each other, new approaches are needed.
- Some patterns can be changed by very simple changes to parenting behavior. Head Start staff can help parents identify the style that works for them and make referrals for other assistance when needed.

Activity 2-6: Observing My Parenting Style (C)

Purpose

Participants will define their ideal parenting style and reflect on how this style is supportive of children's learning.

Materials

Handout 7: *Journal Notes*; Handout 11: *The "Ideal" Parent*; markers; magazines; scissors; glue and other craft items (glitter, stickers, etc.); crayons; pens.

Process

Coach Preparation Notes:
This activity is designed to be done by a parent and a coach together. The parent can be a Head Start parent or a Head Start staff person who is also a parent or a volunteer with children. The role of the coach is to act as a resource or support for the parent as they define and examine their ideal parenting style. The coach can be either a Head Start staff person or another parent. It is important to remember the coach plays a critical role in this activity. It is important for a coach to be sensitive to cultural differences that affect parenting style and be able to accept the parent's ideal parenting style even if it differs from his or her own.

Begin by stating that parenting is a very complex job. Parents nurture and protect children, help them learn about their family's and society's beliefs and values, and teach them the skills they will need to survive as adults.

A supportive parenting style is important if children are to become socially competent. Parenting style can vary from family to family and from parent to parent within a family. However, the style is "supportive" if it enables the child to build self-confidence and feel capable of learning.

Provide participants with a copy of Handout 11: *The "Ideal" Parent*. Use the handout to help participants reflect on their ideal parent. Direct participants to continue this reflection on their own. Provide them with art materials to make a picture of this vision. Set a time to meet after they have completed their picture.

When participants have completed their pictures, ask them to share their vision of the ideal parent. If you are working with more than one participant, ask the group to identify any similarities or differences in the participants' visions.

Then discuss the following questions:

- After completing this activity, what would you like to share with your coach?
- How can Head Start help support you in any changes you want to make in the way you parent?
- Who else (another person, group, or organization) can support you to become the parent you want to be?

Debriefing

Ask participants to reflect on what it feels like to have their parenting styles critiqued by a coach. Discuss ways of giving feedback in positive ways.

For those who are interested, have participants identify one change they would like to make in the way they parent. Work with them to develop a plan for making that change.

Finally, remind participants to use Handout 7: *Journal Notes* to record what they have learned from this activity.

Activity 2-7: Learning All the Time (W)

Purpose
Participants will reflect on the many opportunities in routine daily life that parents have to support their children's learning. They will explore the ways Head Start staff can assist parents to take advantage of these learning opportunities.

Materials

Handout 12: *Learning All the Time*; pens or pencils.

Process

Introduce this activity by suggesting that whenever parents and children are together, learning is occurring. The learning can have positive, negative, or neutral effects on the child. Head Start staff can help parents identify and take greater advantage of the opportunities for learning that arise in their family life.

Divide participants into small groups of four to five people. Ask participants to read through Handout 12: *Learning All the Time* and, as a group, choose one situation to role play. Participants not playing the role of a family member should take the part of a Head Start staff person making a home visit. The staff person's task is to observe the home for learning opportunities: those that were made use of and those that were missed. After the group completes the role play, "staff" should share their observations with the "family."

Allow groups 20 minutes for the role play and sharing of the "staff" persons' observations.

Debriefing

Reconvene the whole group and pose the following questions:

- What challenges did the adults face in accomplishing the tasks they needed to do while also creating a learning experience for their children?
- How would you describe the adult's "teaching" style? What worked to keep the children actively engaged and learning? What did not work?
- What spoken or unspoken messages were parents giving children during this interaction?
- How did parents turn ordinary exchanges into richer learning opportunities?
- What did you learn from this activity that you can apply in your work with families?

Activity 2-8: Learning and Having Fun Together (C)

Purpose

Participants will identify everyday family activities that can be expanded into enjoyable learning activities.

Materials

Handout 13: *Things We Did Together*; paper; pens or pencils.

Process

Coach Preparation Notes:
This activity is designed to be done by a staff person who is also a parent, Head Start parent, or a volunteer with children. The participant should be willing to focus on their interactions with one or more of their children. The role of coach is to facilitate the activity by acting as a resource.

Begin by stating that whenever parents and children are together, learning is occurring. Through careful observation, parents and other adults responsible for children's learning can identify and take greater advantage of the opportunities for learning that arise in their daily family life.

To create learning opportunities, parents do not need to add to the list of things they are already doing. Rather, they need only to remember the joy in the little things they do together with their children and to look for ways that these activities can be extended into more learning.

Distribute paper and pencils to participants. Direct them to list 20 things they like to do with their child, for example, watching a certain TV show together, eating a snack, or going on a family outing. The list can include both trivial and significant activities. Have participants save this list to bring to the debriefing session.

Distribute Handout 13: *Things We Did Together*. Instruct participants to post it on their refrigerator or in some other convenient place. Over a set period of time (for example, four days), have them record activities that they and their children do together. Have them include all kinds of activities, both routine interactions and "special" activities. Have them check off who enjoyed the activity. If they have some activities that no one enjoyed, they should list them anyway.

Debriefing

Have participants compare their lists on Handout 13 to their original lists, looking for similarities and differences. Work with them to find patterns (free or costs money, different times of day, planned or spontaneous, etc.) within the lists of activities. Ask:

> *What did this exercise tell you about the quality of your family activities?*
>
> *What would you like to change?*

Next, have participants select one activity from Handout 13 that they and their children especially enjoyed. Ask:

> *What would you like your child to gain from this activity?*
>
> *How can you broaden it to be a richer learning activity for the child?*
>
> *How can Head Start help you turn this activity into a learning experience for your child?*

Remind participants to record what they have learned from this activity on Handout 7.

Activity 2-9: Putting it All Together (C)

Purpose

In this activity, participants will summarize what they have learned about family learning environments from the four preceding coaching activities in this module. They will also celebrate their strengths as parents and prioritize any changes they would like to make.

Materials

Handout 7: *Journal Notes*, filled out for each coaching activity in Module 2; Handout 14: *Summary of Observations*; crayons, or markers; tape or glue; chart paper; pens; pencils.

Process

Remind participants that through the coaching activities in this module they have had an opportunity to explore four aspects of family learning: family conversations, specifcally asking good questions; mediating messages; parenting style; and learning through everyday activities. Have them envision these four aspects of family learning as parts of a whole puzzle. These coaching activities provided an opportunity to look at each of these parts separately. In real life, however, these parts overlap and often happen at the same time.

Provide participants with Handout 14: *Summary of Observations* and writing materials. Ask them to begin by reviewing the journal notes they recorded on Handout 7 after completing Activity 2-2. Then ask them to think about the questions on the first page of Handout 14. Have them cut out one of the puzzle pieces from Handout 14 and record their responses to the questions on the puzzle piece. Suggest they do this by writing key phrases or complete sentences or by drawing a picture.

When they have finished with the first puzzle piece, have them take a second puzzle piece and summarize their findings from

Activity 2-4. They should use a third puzzle piece for findings from Activity 2-6 and the fourth puzzle piece for Activity 2-8.

When they have completed all four puzzle pieces, have them put the puzzle together and tape it to a large sheet of chart paper. Direct participants to look at the completed puzzle and consider the following:

- What do you like about your family learning environment?
- Are there any things you would like to change or do differently?
- How can Head Start support you in making these changes?

Work with each participant to develop a plan for making changes. Have them consider how they might use the information they've gathered (for example, in a parent-teacher conference, in planning home visits, or in developing a family partnership agreement).

Debriefing

In summarizing the activity, make the following points:

- Children are active contributors to their own knowledge and skills. When adults encourage children through their questions to build upon what they already know, they foster learning.
- Parents influence children's learning directly through what they say and do, and indirectly through the influences they allow into their homes (media, visitors, printed materials, etc.).
- Parents are the organizers of family learning environments. Each parent brings unique strengths to this role. Head Start staff can play an important role in helping parents identify their own strengths and support parents as they define goals for change.

Next Steps

Review the Head Start publication *Emerging Literacy: Linking Social Competence and Learning* to learn more about the importance of reading to children. Select/adapt one or more activities to use with staff and/or parents who are completing activities in Module 2 of this guide.

Visit several Head Start classrooms and observe adult's use of questions (inquiry) with children and with each other. Use these observations to improve your own use of inquiry with children and adults.

Provide opportunities for parents to have fun together. Many parents never learned to play and if they are to play with their children, they will need safe, supportive environments in which to learn.

Review the ERIC digests related to television viewing included in the appendix as a discussion tool. Hold a parent or community forum to discuss ways to mediate messages about the violence children hear and see in the community and on TV. Create a planning team of staff, parents and community representatives to take the ideas and suggestions that come from this meeting and develop them into activities or materials.

Develop a committee of parents, staff and community members to learn from each other about how to talk with children about difficult issues in ways children can understand. The topic of the committee will vary from community to community. For some communities, the issue may be violence or AIDS while in another it may be divorce or racism, areas in which children ask questions and adults struggle to answer honestly but appropriately to the developmental levels of children's understanding.

Select one or more coaching activities from other guides in the *Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community* to build your skills in communicating with parents. *Communicating with Parents* and *A Design for Family Support* are two guides with helpful activities.

Use the information from Handouts 7 and 14 when working with parents to develop a family partnership agreement. Since the coaching activities in this module are starting points, not stand-alone activities, consider repeating the activities later in the program year and make note of the changes. Use this information to refine family goals through the family partnership agreement process.

Create opportunities for families to bring activities from home into classrooms. For example, if baking bread or playing card games were activities parents listed as being enjoyable, teaching staff can provide such materials in the classroom when parents visit or volunteer. Teaching staff can also use such activities as examples of learning encounters in newsletters or discussions, highlighting all that is learned through participating in that activity.

Host a discussion with parents and staff about the use of television with young children. Use the parent guide from *Our Stories Keep Us Connected* to introduce activities parents can do together.

Handout 5: Talking With Your Child

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD

ASK QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE YOUR CHILD TO:

- **Recall and describe events by asking questions about what happened.**
  "What did you do at the playground?"
  "How was the field trip today?"
  "Why did the kitty go away?"

- **Compare one thing with another.**
  "Which dress do you like better? Why?"
  "How do you tell those twins apart?"

- **Explain why something happened.**
  "Why is Sash crying?"
  "Why do you suppose that fire truck is on our street?"

- **Explain a point of view or feelings.**
  "Why is Johnny your best friend?"
  "What is your favorite part of Head Start?"

- **Repeat what has been talked about or recently seen.**
  "What is our rule about crossing the street?"
  "Will you sing the song you learned today?"

The above questions are open-ended because children need to think through and explain their answers. These kinds of questions help children develop language skills and encourage children to use thinking skills.

Handout 6: Listening Coding Sheet

Listen to an audio tape of you and your child working or playing together. Every time you hear yourself ask a **closed question**, put a "✓" on the left side of the paper. Closed questions ask for a single word response. For example:

- What color is this?
- What's your name?

When you hear yourself ask your child an **open-ended question**, put a "✓" on the right side of the paper. Listen to the tape as often as you need to. Open-ended questions encourage children's thinking. For example, you might ask a child to:

- Make a comparison (e.g., Who has more?)
- Predict outcomes (e.g., What should we do about going to the park tomorrow if it rains?)
- Elaborate on his/her feelings or observations (e.g., How do you feel about having a new baby brother?)

Closed questions	Open-ended questions

Listen to the tape again. This time, listen for the child's responses. Make notes on how the child responds to:

Closed questions or	Open-ended questions

Handout 7: Journal Notes

All of the coaching activities in Module 2 of this guide are designed to help you observe how adults support children's learning. After you complete each activity, take a moment and reflect. You can use the following questions to help organize your thoughts.

1. What did I learn about children's learning from this activity? About my child?

2. What did I learn about how adults support children's learning? About myself as a parent?

3. What would I like to learn more about?

Handout 8: Mediating Messages

Using the following situations as examples, discuss the following questions:

- What message is the child getting from his or her experience?
- How do you feel about it?
- What can you say or do to help mediate the message the child received and at the same time strengthen the message you want to support?

- A young child screams a 4-letter word at her sister. The parent has never used the word in the children's presence and is shocked to hear it.
- While watching TV, the children watch a beer commercial where everyone is having a good time on a beach. It looks as if the way to be happy and "cool" is to drink that kind of beer.
- A four-year-old is sitting at breakfast looking at the back of a cereal box, which advertises a new toy weapon for only 4 box-tops and $9.99. "I need this...let's get it now!" he exclaims.
- A child's favorite neighbor is arrested for a drug-related incident. The child is confused...he insists that his friend is not "bad."
- The television news reports the death of a child. "People don't die until they are very, very old," the child insists.
- A child comes home singing the words to a popular song with sexually explicit lyrics.
- A toddler comes home from a babysitter where she was pushed by an older child. She immediately pushes her baby brother.
- A child, having eaten food at a friend's house that is never eaten at home, demands that food for dinner.

Think about examples from your own experience that might require mediation. Use the group to help think of different mediation strategies you might use.

Handout 9: Mixed Messages

Instructions: Children learn from the actions and words of people they see regularly, whether or not those words and actions are meant for them. In the box below, write a message — a belief or value — that you hope your children would be exposed to frequently so that it becomes one of their beliefs or values.

Then, when your children are watching a half-hour television show of your choice, watch it with them. Observe both the show and the commercials. Each time any words or actions **support** your message, put a check in the "Supports Message" column. Each time any words or actions **oppose** your message, put a check in the "Opposes Message" column. Next to each check mark, describe the words or actions.

BELIEF OR VALUE

	Supports Message	Opposes Message	Description
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

Continue on another sheet if necessary.

Handout 10: Dinner Time at Rosie's

Rosie has three children. They attend child care programs while she works part-time. Recently she started taking an adult education class that starts at 6:30 p.m. She signed up for the night class because it was closer to where she lives than the day class. Also, the children's stepfather, Michael, is home evenings so she doesn't need a babysitter.

Today she picked up her children up at 4:00 p.m., chatted briefly with the child care provider, and then rushed home. Her plan is to have dinner over by 5:30 so she can get the children ready for bed before she leaves. However, it's already 5:00 and she's just starting to prepare the meal.

Her oldest daughter, Rae, is doing homework at the table. Rosie has asked Rae several times to set the table, but Rae is absorbed in her math problems. With each new problem she calls, "I don't get it. How do you do this?" Rosie stops what she is doing the first few times to help Rae. But when the child keeps asking for help with every problem, Rosie gets frustrated. She tells Rae, "I just can't help you now. I've got to fix dinner." Rae shouts back, "You don't care about me! I hate you!"

Rosie looks at her daughter and says, "If that math is too hard for you, Michael can help you after supper, or I can help you in the morning. But set the table now, we have to eat." Rae's allowance is based on doing chores, and one of those chores is setting the table. Rosie wonders how much to nag. After all, isn't she supposed to be teaching responsibility?

Meanwhile, Don and Dante, her four- and six-year-olds, are in the other room watching TV and playing with action figures. She can't see them but it's impossible not to hear them. The older child is trying to direct the play and is telling the younger child what to say and do. The younger child is getting impatient and knocking all the action figures over. They are screaming and calling each other names. Rosie calls out for them to "hold it down!" No one has come into the kitchen crying yet but Rosie expects that to happen any minute. Finally, the screaming gets too loud for Rosie. She goes into the living room and turns off the TV. The boys want her to solve the dispute. "Mom, he wrecked the castle," says Don. "Mom, he won't let me have my guy," says Dante. Rosie puts each boy on a chair and tells them to take a five minute time-out.

Now it's 5:30. Dinner is not ready, the table is not set, and the boys are not cooperating with the time-out. Michael is not yet home, either. Rosie wonders if he forgot that she was going to class tonight. She wonders if the class is too much to add to her family's schedule. Should she drop out and try again when the children are older?

Handout 11: The "Ideal" Parent

Your parenting is a difficult job. Parents are expected to provide a safe and nurturing environment; to help their children develop trust, self control and self-esteem; and to help their children develop good judgment. It's no wonder the job of parent is so important and often overwhelming. There is no magic formula to be the "perfect" parent.

Your task is to define the kind of parent you would *like* to be. In other words, what style of parenting works for you and your family. To do this, first think about:

- Your own parents. What do you like about the way they parented? What would you do differently?

- Other family members, neighbors, friends, or TV characters that you think are good parents. What is it about their parenting style that you admire?

- Your own children as parents. How would you like to see them parent your grandchildren? What advice would you give them? What parenting skills do you want them to begin developing now?

- The tasks that parents do (protect and nurture children, teach values and behaviors, communicate expectations, set rules, discipline, resolve conflict, etc.). What do parents need to know, and how do they need to behave, in order to do these tasks well?

Remember, this is a picture of the kind of parent you would like to be.
Let your imagination go!

Handout 12: Learning All The Time

As a group, choose one of these stories to role play:

☐ A father and his two children are in the car, going to pick up their mother from work.

☐ A mother helps her older child with homework but her toddler also wants attention.

☐ Parents watch television with their children.

☐ A grandfather and his grandchildren go grocery shopping.

☐ Parents and their children prepare for a family outing.

☐ A father and his children go to the laundromat.

☐ A mother tries to feed a 10-month old without a huge mess.

Rules:

1. Make sure at least one child in the story is of Head Start or early Head Start age.
2. Use your own experience and imagination to develop the story.
3. Everyone who does not play the role of a family member should be a "home visitor." The home visitors are to observe the role play with these questions in mind:

    ○ What are the adults doing to affect the learning experience?

    ○ What are the children learning that is positive? negative? neutral?

    ○ Which parenting strategies contribute to a positive learning experience?

    ○ Which parenting strategies do not contribute to learning?

    ○ What changes in parenting style might you suggest?

Handout 13: Things We Did Together

	✓ Who liked this activity?		
Activity:	**My child**	**I did**	**What I learned about my child**

Handout 14: Summary of Observations

Every family functions as a family learning environment. Each family learning environment has its own strengths and its own set of challenges. What do you think about your family's learning environment? Before answering that question, review the information you have gathered and recorded on copies of Handout 7: *Journal Notes*.

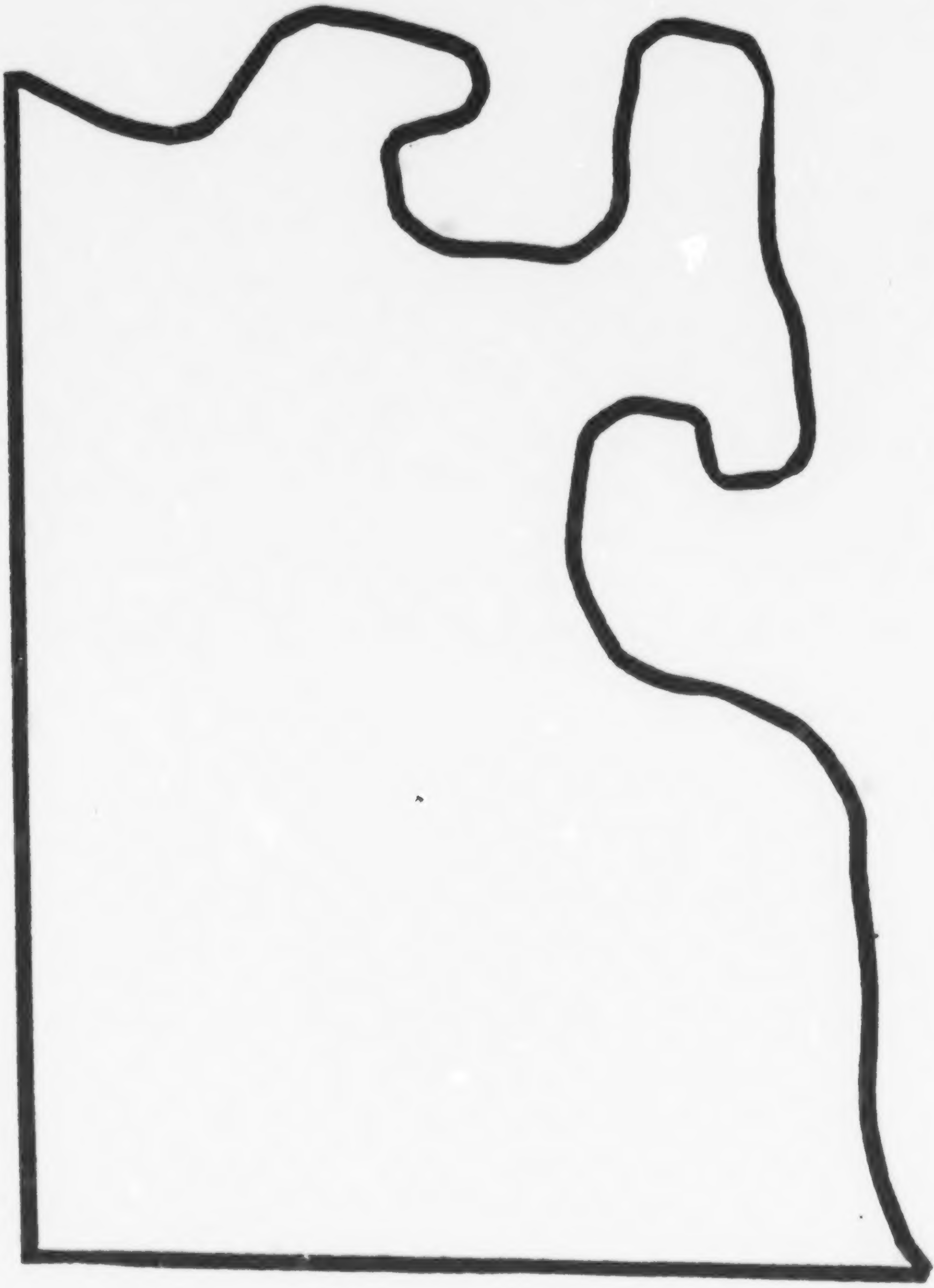
What have you learned about how your child(ren) learn best? Which teaching tools (types of questions, activities, etc.) work best?

What have you learned about yourself as a "teacher"? What do you do best?

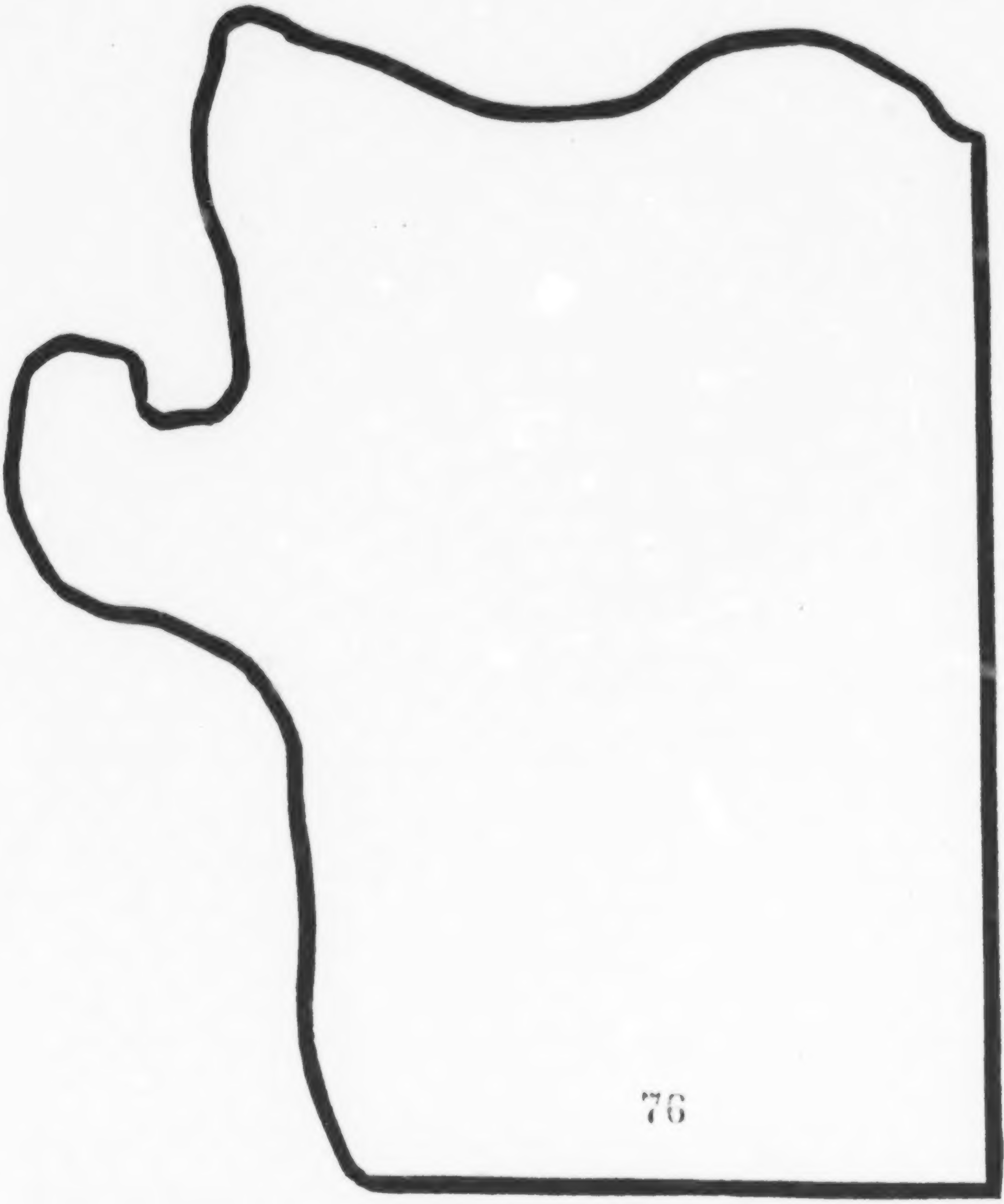
What would you like to change?

How would you like to use Head Start as a resource?

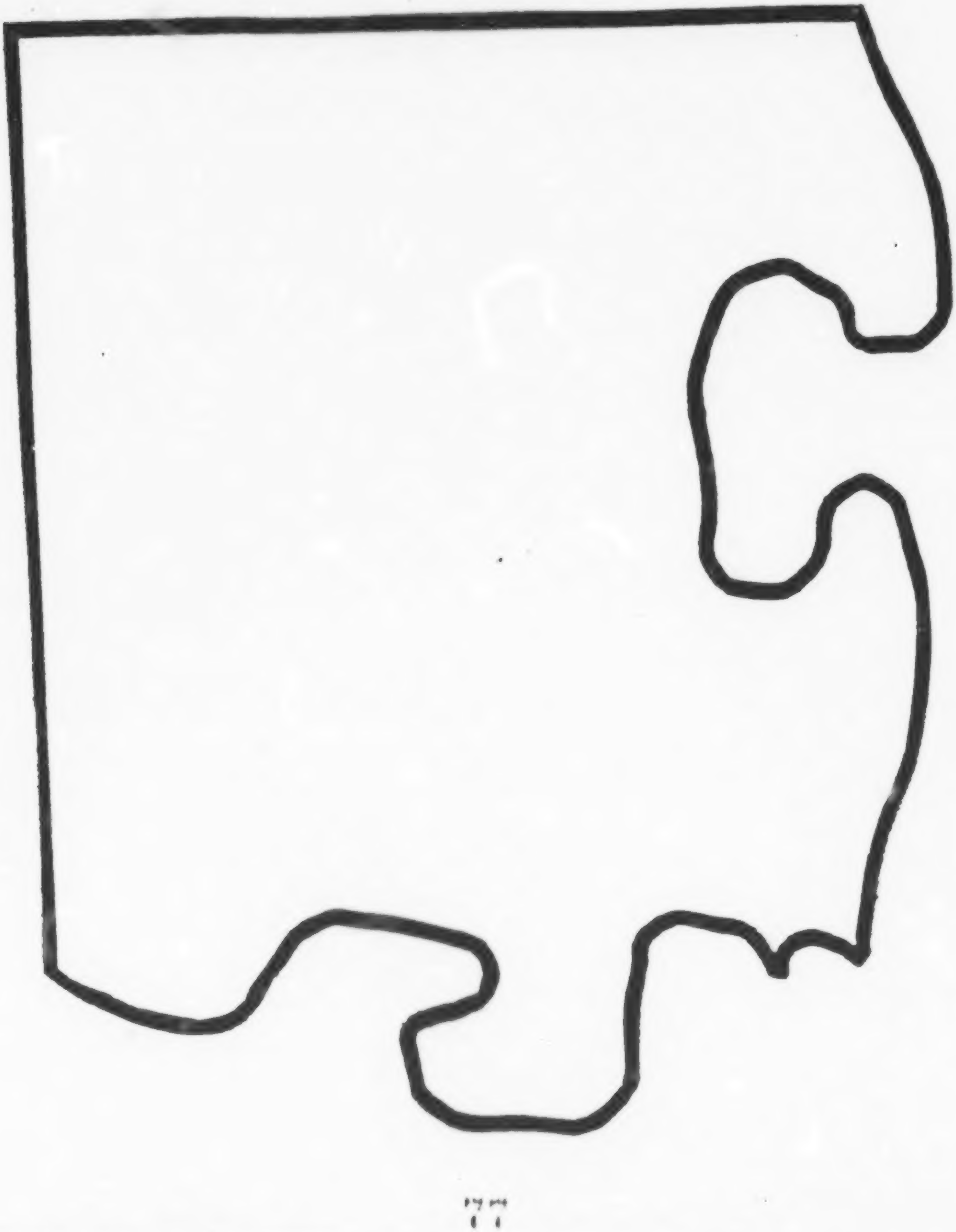
Handout 14: Summary of Observations (Continued)



Handout 14: Summary of Observations (Continued)



Handout 14: Summary of Observations (Continued)



Handout 14: Summary of Observations (Continued)

Module 3

Supporting Family Learning Goals

Outcomes

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Use observations to individualize services that support family learning.
- Use home visits and parent-teacher conferences as opportunities to support family learning goals.
- Identify how their program can provide a range of family literacy activities to meet the needs of families.

Key Concepts

- Head Start, through such formal activities as home visits, parent-teacher conferences, and family literacy activities, can extend and support the learning that occurs within families.
- Parents goals can and should shape the way programs deliver services to support family learning.
- Good observation and listening skills are necessary in order to provide the individualized services that best support family learning.

Background Information

The purpose of this module is to encourage participants to examine common practices that link home and classroom learning environments. Specifically, the module examines parent-teacher conferences, home visits, and family literacy activities. These three strategies have been a mainstay of most Head Start programs and can be used to extend and support learning that occurs in the classroom. However, these program elements also can extend and support the learning that occurs *within* the family. For this to happen, services must be tailored to the interests and needs of each family.

Parent-teacher conferences are important tools for building strong bridges between the culture of home and that of Head Start. Some parent-teacher conferences are approached as a means to present information to parents on how their children are doing in the classroom. However, parent-teacher conferences can be more productive if they are approached as an opportunity for parents and teachers to exchange information. As teachers and parents better understand one another's expectations, they can better support children's learning across settings.

Parents can usually give examples of their interests and describe the approach a child takes to solving a problem. With that knowledge, teachers can individualize within the classroom. When teachers show interest in hearing about parents' observations, motivation to share observations continues to grow. Curiosity often sparks more curiosity. A "let's learn more about how your child learns" joint venture between parent and teacher will yield far more positive long-term effects than an approach based on reporting weaknesses or problem areas.

Home visits are a tradition in Head Start. One of the unique features of this type of service delivery is that it offers Head Start families the special advantage of one-to-one relationships. Over time, home visits can help build a strong relationship with a family and obtain a more intimate understanding of their goals and needs.

Home visits can be held for many different reasons, for example: to exchange information with a family, to recognize and build on family strengths, or to address problem issues facing the family. Whatever the reason for the visit, home visits are an ideal way for staff to individualize services for families in a partnership approach.

In this module, the focus is on jointly planning instructional home visits with parents. That is, a home visit where the purpose is to plan and try out activities which extend learning through everyday activities that occur in the home.

Instructional home visits are most often associated with home-based Head Start services. The activities in this module were designed for staff who routinely make this type of home visit. However, the process of involving parents as co-planners of home visits could be adapted to meet the needs of staff from center-based programs as well.

Home visits are most successful when:

- They build on activities that already occur in the home.
- Activities are tailored to each family.
- Parents are senior partners in the planning process.

To develop successful visits, staff conducting home visits make observations, support parents as they make observations, and talk with family members to determine interests, concerns, and goals. In partnership with parents, they select activities that support the educational goals of family members.

Family literacy is based upon the philosophy that parents and children can learn and succeed together. By working with parents and children as a family, rather than focusing on them exclusively as individuals, programs can better reinforce the motivation both parents and children have to succeed together.

In many ways, Head Start is in a natural position to provide family literacy services. Like Head Start, family literacy begins with a family strengths perspective. That is, the primary role of staff is to help families identify and build upon their own strengths in order to achieve the goals they themselves identify. And like Head Start, family literacy views parents as the child's first and most important teacher.

Family literacy programs include three core (or primary) services. These core services include:

- Early childhood education, which could include activities on emergent literacy in classroom or home settings.
- Adult education which could include basic literacy skills, diploma or GED preparation, English as a second language and/or preparation to workplace literacy skills.
- Parenting education opportunities which focus on supporting parents as the organizers of the family learning environment. In comprehensive family literacy programs, at least some of these activities occur with parents and children learning together.

What makes family literacy programs unique is that core services are integrated into a holistic approach to serving families rather than each being planned and implemented separately. For example, in some family literacy programs parenting materials are used as the basis for adult literacy instruction; parents observe children in their early childhood setting in order to co-plan parent/child activities; and adult and early childhood educators meet together with families to plan strategies to meet family learning goals. In short, family literacy programs wrap services around the interest and needs of families to provide a coordinated approach.

While comprehensive family literacy programs offer all three services, the way in which they provide services may vary. For example, some programs provide all three services within a single agency while others offer services through the collaborative efforts of several community agencies. Some programs provide entirely home-based services, while others are center-based or a combination of the two. Most programs that are family-centered also address the need for flexible hours, family supports (e.g., child care while adults are in adult education, transportation, etc.) and referrals for additional services to community resources.

Most Head Start grantees already offer some family literacy activities. The challenge for Head Start programs is to take stock of the types of activities they already offer and decide if the range of activities is sufficient to meet the diverse needs of families and the requirements of the Performance Standards.

Activity 3-1: Parent-Teacher Conferences (W)

Purpose
Participants will practice planning for parent-teacher conferences that support family learning.

Materials

Handout 15: *Lara's Point of View*; Handout 16: *Mary Ellin's Point of View*; Handout 17: *Discussion Questions*; pen or pencils.

Process

> **Trainer Preparation Notes:**
> In order to effectively support family learning, staff need to be skilled at listening to parents and giving them feedback. Therefore, in conjunction with this activity, you may want to present training activities from Module 2 in the guide *Communicating with Parents.*

Begin by stating that parent-teacher conferences can help build strong bridges between the learning that goes on at home and at Head Start. For this to happen, parents and teachers need to share information with each other. They need to know what is going on in the other's setting, the teaching strategies that each uses, and each other's concerns and goals.

Divide participants into two groups. One group will focus on the parent's perspective. Distribute Handout 15: *Lara's Point of View* to this group. The other group will focus on the teacher's perspective and should be given Handout 16: *Mary Ellin's Point of View.*

Ask each group to select a volunteer to read the handout to their group. Then direct each group to begin a discussion of the questions at the bottom of the handout. Allow 20-25 minutes for reading and discussion.

Have the first group recruit a volunteer to play the role of the parent, and have the second group recruit a volunteer to play the role of the teacher. The rest of the participants will watch and observe the role play. Allow 5-6 minutes for a role play of the parent-teacher conference.

Trainer Preparation Notes:
If you have a large number of participants, divide participants into an even number of smaller groups that can be paired for the role play.

Discuss the role play using the following questions:

- Did the parent communicate to the teacher what she wanted her to know (and vice versa)?
- Did the parent get the information she wanted from the teacher (and vice versa)?
- What facilitated the sharing of information? What got in the way?
- What concerns were of importance to both Lara and Mary Ellin?
- How did this conference help build bridges between the learning that goes on at home and at Head Start?
- Was there any way to make this conference even more successful?
- What can teachers and other staff do to prepare for a conference?

Debriefing

In summarizing this activity, make the following points:

- Parent-teacher conferences are opportunities where both parents and teachers can share information and concerns.
- Parent-teacher conferences can be used to build bridges between the learning that goes on at home and at school.

- Successful parent-teacher conferences require preparation, planning, and follow-up.

Conclude the activity by leading a discussion of the following question:

> *How do our parent-teacher conferences support both the agenda of the parents and the agenda of the teachers?*

Activity 3-2: Planning for Parent-Teacher Conferences (C)

Purpose
Participants will prepare for an actual parent-teacher conference in order to be active participants.

Materials

Handout 14: *Summary of Observations* (from Module 2) filled out; Handout 18: *Planning for Your Conference with the Teacher*; pens or pencils.

Process

Coach Preparation Notes:

This activity was designed to be done by a parent who is actually attending a parent-teacher conference and a trusted staff person (or other parent) who has volunteered to help them prepare for it.

Begin by stating that an important way parents advocate for their children is by actively participating in parent-teacher conferences. Doing this successfully, however, requires preparation.

As a first step in this preparation, have participants review Handout 14: *Summary of Observations*, on which they recorded their findings and impressions from activities in Module 2. Have participants reflect on what they have observed in terms of their children's skills, interests, and needs. Also have them reflect on the teaching and parenting strategies they have observed to work with their children.

Distribute Handout 18: *Planning for Your Conference With the Teacher*. With you or with a partner, have participants talk through each item on the handout. If participants are comfortable, role play the conference, with you or another partner taking on the teacher's role.

Provide any assistance that participants need to arrange for an actual parent-teacher conference. Set a time and place to meet again after the conference.

Debriefing

Ask participants to describe how the conference went. Then discuss the following:

- How can you talk about what you learned in the conference with your child in a positive way?
- What goals did you decide on with the teacher?
- How do you plan to work together with your child on these goals?
- How do you plan to communicate with the teacher about progress toward the goals?
- What can you do that will help you be consistent in following through on this plan?

Remind participants that they should feel free at any time to talk with the teacher or ask for another conference.

In summarizing this activity, make the following points:

- Parent-teacher conferences are opportunities where everyone's agenda can be met.
- Successful parent-teacher conferences require planning and follow-up.

Activity 3-3: Planning Home Visits Together (W)

Purpose
Participants will use observations as a basis for co-planning instructional home visits.

Materials

Handout 19: *Planning Home Visits Together*; Head Start video, *Our Stories Keep Us Connected*; VCR and monitor.

Trainer Preparation Notes:

This activity on planning home visits is most appropriate to use with staff in home based Head Start programs who make regularly schedule instructional home visits. However, the activity could be used in training center-based staff to improve their skills in observing how parents impact children's learning.

Process

Begin by stating that home visits are not all the same. Some home visits are held to exchange information between families and programs. At some home visits, staff and parents address problems facing the family. Home visits also can be a strategy for introducing learning activities parents can do at home with their children.

Home visits work best when both parents and staff are focused on the same goals, the activities are tailored to the family, and the activities build on families interests and strengths.

Introduce the Head Start video, *Our Stories Keep Us Connected*. Select one or two families from the film to show participants. Divide participants into small groups. Distribute Handout 19: *Planning Home Visits Together*, and review the observation tips from page one. Ask participants to observe as though they were a staff person planning to make a home visit with the families. Then show the video.

After the video is over, ask groups to discuss the questions on the handout. Remind each group to select someone to take notes. Allow 20-30 minutes for discussion. Replay segments of the video as necessary.

Bring the entire group back together. Ask a spokesperson from each group to report on their discussion.

After each group has had an opportunity to report their findings, note some of the similarities and differences between each groups' responses. Continue by stating that home visits work best when they build upon activities families already do within the context of their daily lives. Therefore, they must be individualized and family centered.

Debriefing

Summarize the activity by making the following points:

- All parents want their children to learn.
- Because parents plan and oversee the daily routines at home through which their children learn, they need to be involved in planning the activities used in home visits.
- Home visits work best when they build upon activities families already do in the context of their daily lives. Therefore, they must be individualized.
- Home visits can create or strengthen bridges to and from home and Head Start.

Activity 3-4: A Five-Step Planning Process (C)

Purpose
Participants will learn and practice a five-step process for developing individualized, family-centered plans for instructional home visits.

Materials

Handouts 20: *James and David*; Handout 21: *The Stories Found In Playtime;* Handout 22: *Planning Home Visits*; materials with parent/child activities such as Head Start's *Our Stories Keep Us Connected* or *Fun and Learning For Parents and Children.*

Process

Coach Preparation Notes:

This activity is most appropriate for staff who make regular, ongoing home visits. This could be home-based staff working with children or staff providing individualized parenting education opportunities to parents.

Begin by defining instructional as home visits as home visits that are used to plan and try out activities which extend learning through the everyday activities that occur in the home. These visits might be part of a home-based Head Start or a strategy for providing individualized parenting educational opportunities. These home visits are most successful when:

- They build on activities that already occur in the home.
- Activities are tailored to each family.
- Parents are used as key resources in planning.

Provide participants with a copy of Handout 20: *James and David* and Handout 21: *The Stories Found in Playtime*. Explain that you will be using the examples on the handouts to explore a five step process for jointly planning home visits. Read through these handouts together using the questions listed to guide the discussion.

Debriefing

When you have completed the questions on Handout 20, discuss the following question:

> *What can we learn from this exercise about the importance of co-planning for the success of home visits?*

When participants have completed the discussion, conclude the activity by providing them a copy of Handout 22: *Planning Home Visits*. Explain that they may want to extend this activity by actually co-planning their own home visit, using Handout 22 as a guide.

Note that, depending on the family, staff person, and how well they know each other, it may take one or more initial home visits just to accomplish Steps 1 and 2. (For example, in order to identify goals, the parent and staff person making the home visit may want to spend one or more home visits looking through publications for suitable family learning activities.)

Activity 3-5: Supporting Family Literacy (W)

Purpose
In this activity, participants will identify what their program already does to support family literacy.

Materials

Overhead 1: *Supporting Family Literacy*; Handout 23: *How Well Do We Support Family Literacy?*; overhead projector and screen; Post-It™ notes or 3 x 5 cards; chart paper; markers and tape.

Process

Use the information in the background section to introduce the concept of family literacy. Then use Overhead 1 (or write the information on chart paper) to emphasize that family literacy programs focus on the family as a learning unit. Central to the services offered in family literacy programs are those that:

- Help children acquire the skills they need to become literate.
- Help parents advance their own literacy skills.

- Help parents learn how their children learn and how they can support their children's literacy efforts.

Continue by stating that family literacy activities are already an important part of many Head Start programs. The challenge for Head Start programs is to examine if the activities they offer meet the needs of the families they serve.
Provide participants with a stack of 3 x 5 cards or a pad of Post-It™ notes. Explain that in this activity they will be asked to answer the following question:

> *Do we offer a range of family literacy activities to meet the needs of all the families we serve?*

As a first step, ask participants to reflect for a moment on all the different ways — big and small — that their Head Start program supports literacy. For example:

- We offer parenting workshops on how to read to young children.
- We help parents get involved with the local GED program.
- The children make "All About Me" books in the classroom.

Ask participants to write each activity they think of on a separate 3 x 5 card or Post-It™ note.

Allow 5-7 minutes for this brainstorming exercise.

While participants are brainstorming, post chart paper in three different areas of the room. Label the chart paper in area 1: *Helping children acquire the skills they need to become literate.* Label the chart paper in area 2: *Helping parents advance their own literacy skills*. Label the chart paper in area 3: *Helping parents learn about how their children learn and how to support their children's literacy efforts*.

When participants have finished brainstorming, call their attention to the chart paper posted around the room. State that one useful way to assess the range of a program's family literacy activities is to begin by categorizing them.

Ask participants to review each activity they listed on cards or Post-It™ notes. Then ask them to go around the room and attach the 3 x 5 cards or Post-Its™ to the appropriate chart paper. Continue this process until all cards or Post-Its™ have been categorized. Ask the group to review each list to eliminate any duplicates or make any changes they feel are necessary.

Next, divide participants into small groups. Ask each group to consider the information on the chart paper while using Handout 23: *How Well Do We Support Family Literacy*? to "rate" (from their own perspective) their program's family literacy efforts. Allow 20-25 minutes for discussion.

Bring the whole group back together and ask for volunteers from each of the small groups to report on how they rated the program (in terms of total number of stars) and to give a brief summary of how they came to this rating.

Continue discussing using the following questions as a guide:

- Based on the diverse literacy needs of the families in your Head Start program, is there a need to expand the activities in any particular area? Why?
- What can you do within the Head Start program to provide services in this area?
- Who or what community groups can Head Start work with to provide some of these services?

Debriefing

Conclude this activity by stating that all Head Start programs offer some types of family literacy activities. The challenge is to ensure that a range of activities are offered to match the diverse interests and needs of the families being served.

Activity 3-6: Literacy Building Activities (C)

Purpose
Participants will examine how Head Start staff can support families' use of literacy activities in everyday experiences.

Materials

Handout 24: *Literacy Building Activities*; two different colors of pens.

Process

Begin by stating that what happens in the home significantly influences a child's learning. Parents support their children's literacy development in many ways including:

- Creating a home that is rich in reading and writing materials.
- Reading, telling, or writing stories with their children.

- Modeling everyday uses of reading and writing.
- Talking to their infants/toddlers about what they are doing while they are doing it.
- Listening to talking books borrowed from the public library.
- Holding positive attitudes toward education.

Distribute Handout 24: *Literacy Building Activities.* Ask them to reflect on their experiences with their child, their experiences as a parent, and/or their experiences at Head Start, in order to answer the four questions on the handout. Encourage them to come up with at least five responses to each question using one of the colored pens. Participants may work individually or in pairs.

When they are finished, ask them to use a different color of pen to jot down next to each response ideas they have for how Head Start can help parents accomplish this literacy building activity. Using the four examples from the handout, here are some possible ideas:

1. They have books in the home — hold a book giveaway.
2. They create a family storybook — organize a "lend a camera" program.
3. They use bus schedules — hold a learning session on schedule reading (bus schedules and also TV schedules, class schedules, etc.).
4. They attend a class themselves. Give certificates *and* frames to display their achievement when parents complete a class.

Debriefing

Ask participants:

- What more can you, as an individual, be doing to support the literacy building activities of families?
- What more could the program be doing to support the literacy building activities of families?

Next Steps

Have a discussion about the quality of the home visits your program provides. Use the information sheet on quality considerations for home visits contained in the appendix as a guide for the discussion.

Review materials in your Head Start library or resource room and those available in your community for ideas of learning activities parents and children can do together. Create a directory or index of activities that can be used by staff for instructional home visits, newsletter topics, or responses to parent requests. Be sure to extend beyond reading and writing literacy activities and include activities in hands-on math and science.

Activities in materials such as *Exploring Parenting* address common parental concerns but are designed as workshop activities. Adapt a workshop activity to one that parents and children can do together at home during a home visit.

Create a committee of parents and staff to look for new ways to connect classroom and family learning environments. For example, publish a monthly calendar that gives parents suggestions of activities they can do at home that connect with topics or events that are happening in the classroom; create a series of storybook kits for a lending library that contain a book, a sample activity, and all the materials needed to carry out the activity at home; as part of every parent/teacher conference provide parents with sample activities, books, and materials that they can use at home to support their children's learning in specific skill areas.

As a follow-up to a parent-teacher conference, develop a solution-focused plan for building and sustaining bridges between the classroom and home environments. The Head Start guide *Supporting Families in Crisis* contains a process for developing such plans.

Have staff and/or parents use the process in Activity 3-4 to prepare for a parent-teacher conference for a school-aged child. Or, review Module 2 of *Planning for Transitions* for suggestions of activities designed to help staff and parents prepare for and participate in individualized transition planning conferences.

Review your program's family partnership agreements process and identify family and adult literacy goals that are common across families. Use this information as a springboard for program planning, especially when designing parenting education opportunities. Or, look for ways to create volunteer opportunities that connect with parent's own literacy or employment goals.

Organize regular visits to your local library and consider holding parent workshops on how to select a book for your child (or for themselves) and how to read a book to children at different ages. As part of the workshops, provide opportunities for everyone to get a library card. Use the Library-Head Start Partnership Project materials to generate more ideas.

Overhead 1: Supporting Family Literacy

Family literacy programs focus on the family as the learning unit. Family literacy programs offer services that:

- Help children acquire the skills they need to become literate.
- Help parents advance their own literacy skills.
- Help parents learn how their children learn and how to support their children's literacy efforts.

Handout 15: Lara's Point of View

Lara is a young mother who lives with her grandmother and her young daughter Sasha. Sasha, who is in Head Start, loves to draw and tell stories. However, she has a speech delay and a limited spoken vocabulary. As a result, it can take a long time for her stories to come out. She is receiving therapy at Head Start which seems to be helping with both speech and language.

Lara has noticed that Sasha often gets frustrated when she talks. Lara and her grandmother love to listen to Sasha and they are both very patient with her. However, sometimes Sasha will lash out in anger when she is having a hard time making herself understood.

Lara also has noticed that, even though there are a lot of children in the building where they live, Sasha does not seem to have many friends. And even though Sasha seems to like Head Start, she doesn't talk about the friends she has made there. Lara wonders whether the children at school like her or, for that matter, whether the teacher likes her.

Lara is concerned about sending Sasha to kindergarten next year. Sasha does not adjust easily to new situations, and it took her a long time to feel comfortable at Head Start. Lara is bothered by the prospect of having to take Sasha out of a situation that seems to be working for her. For herself as a parent, Lara does not look forward to starting all over with a new school, new teachers, and new procedures.

Lara has just started an all-day training program. She's nervous about it, because school has always been very stressful for her. She doesn't read well so she is not sure she will be able to keep up. She's determined to try, though, even though she knows she will have to study very hard.

Lara missed the first round of parent-teacher conferences because Head Start was new to her and she was nervous about being alone with the teacher. She didn't have a phone at the time, and she never returned the conference sign-up form. Another notice about parent-teacher conferences just came home in Sasha's backpack, and Lara thinks she would like to do it this time.

Discuss these questions from Lara's point of view:

What do you want Sasha's teacher to know?

What do you want to learn from Sasha's teacher?

What conference arrangements would best suit you (time, place, involvement of others, arrangements for child care, transportation, etc.)?

What would be a good way to make those arrangements?

Handout 16: Mary Ellin's Point of View

Mary Ellin is Sasha's Head Start teacher. She likes Sasha a lot. She thinks Sasha is very creative. Her drawing skills are advanced for a child her age. She's also very expressive during creative movement, and she puts together amazing outfits for dress-up. Mary Ellin also has noticed that Sasha is very sensitive to how other children are feeling.

Mary Ellin is pleased with how well Sasha has adjusted to the class. She is holding her own, skillwise. Assessments show her development to be progressing normally in motor and cognitive tasks. Mary Ellin believes that Sasha needs the most help with social and language skills because of her speech delays. Because Sasha still has a hard time expressing herself, the other children aren't always willing to hear her out. They get distracted or interrupt her. Mary Ellin has noticed that when this happens, Sasha seems to retreat into her drawing.

Mary Ellin would like to work more intensely with Sasha, but unfortunately she doesn't have much time to focus on any one child. She used to have a lot of parent volunteers, so the children could get the one-on-one attention they need and enjoy. But for some reason, only a few parents have volunteered in the class this year.

Mary Ellin met Sasha's mother, briefly, at a Parents' Night function. She knows that the family worker has visited Sasha's home, but she doesn't know how it went. She remembers that Sasha's mother did not come in during the last round of parent-teacher conferences, but she is not sure why.

Discuss these questions from Mary Ellin's point of view:

> *What do you want Sasha's mother to know?*
>
> *What do you want to learn from Sasha's mother?*
>
> *What conference arrangements would work best for you (time, place, involvement of others, arrangements for child care, transportation, etc.)?*
>
> *What would be a good way to make those arrangements?*

Handout 17: Discussion Questions

Discuss the role play using the following questions:

- Did the parent communicate to the teacher what she wanted her to know (and vice versa)?
- Did the parent get the information she wanted from the teacher (and vice versa)?
- What facilitated the sharing of information? What got in the way?
- What concerns were of importance to both Lara and Mary Ellin?
- How did this conference help build bridges between the learning that goes on at home and at Head Start?
- Was there any way to make this conference even more successful?
- What can teachers and other staff do to prepare for a conference?

Handout 18: Planning for Your Conference with the Teacher

Setting up the conference

Think about what arrangements would work best for you.

- What would be a good time and place?
- Do you want anyone else to be there?
- What do you want to be the main focus of this meeting?
- Do you have any transportation or child care needs?
- Will you need any help (a translator, wheelchair access, etc.)?

Think about what records or information you want the teacher to have at the meeting.

As you set up the meeting, speak up about your needs and preferences.

Before the conference

Talk with your child about what's going on at Head Start — what he or she likes or doesn't like about it.

Think about what you want the teacher to know about your child and your family (make a list).

Think about what you want to ask the teacher (again, make a list).

Pull together any records or information you want to share with the teacher.

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Handout 18: Planning for Your Conference with the Teacher (Continued)

At the conference

Remember that you are an equal partner with the teacher.

Tell the teacher what you want him or her to know about your child.

Ask the teacher the questions you want answered.

If you do not understand something, ask to have it repeated or explained.

Discuss goals for the child (skills he or she needs to work on).

Ask how Head Start will support these goals.

Ask how you can support these goals.

Make plans with the teacher for keeping in touch between conferences.

After the conference

Discuss the conference with your child and mention:

- The good things the teacher said.
- The goals for the child (skills he or she needs to work on).
- How the child can work on these goals at Head Start.
- How you will help with these goals at home.
- Follow through with plans to help your child with their goals.
- Praise your child for working at their goals.
- Whenever you feel the need, call the teacher or arrange another conference.

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Handout 19: Planning Home Visits Together

Select one of the families shown on the Head Start video *Families Keep Us Connected*. Put yourself in the role of a staff person who will be making a home visit with this family to plan future home visits, or other Head Start services.

As you observe the family in action, pay particular attention to how learning occurs within everyday family activities.

For example...

...listen to:

- what parents say about their children's learning or how children learn.
- what they say about a parent's role as a teacher.
- what parents say about their own learning or their own childhood.
- the conversations between parents and children.

...observe how:

- parents use everyday objects as tools for learning.
- parents use different techniques (e.g., direct instruction, modeling, demonstration) in different situations.
- children are learning skills, knowledge, attitudes, and feelings in different learning situations.

After viewing the video, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you think are the parents' goals and expectations for their children's learning?

2. What is the family already doing to foster learning?

3. What needs have parents identified for themselves?

4. What activities, resources, or experiences would extend the learning that is already occurring in the home?

5. How would you involve the parents in planning a home visit?

6. What factors do you need to consider when planning home visits (for example, younger siblings, work schedule of parents, etc.)?

Handout 20: James and David

Read the following story about James and his son David. Use the questions after each step as a guide for your discussion.

Step 1: Determine the family's interests, concerns, and goals.

James and a Head Start family worker are talking in the kitchen while James' son, David, age four, plays in the next room. The home visitor tells James she is very interested in how he feels David is doing. They talk about David's progress at school and his life at home. Then James mentions that he has become concerned about his son's love of violence and his rude language. According to James, David turns everything into a weapon. When David can't find a stick to use as a weapon, he uses his fingers. He loves to pretend he is using karate to fight enemies. David is particularly aggressive when playing with his five-year-old cousin, but he acts rough with just about everybody. When he has a disagreement with family members, he will pretend to shoot or use karate on them. He will also call them names or say, "I'm going to kill you!"

☐ *What are James's concerns? How do these concerns impact upon his relationship with David?*

☐ *How might the Head Start worker feel about these concerns as a topic for discussion on a home visit?*

Step 2: Focus on a learning goal.

In talking with the staff person, James says he wants David to stop being bad. The Head Start worker and James discuss this and decide on the following goal: to help David find positive ways of playing with and relating to others.

☐ *In this example, the Head Start worker stated the learning goal in positive terms (i.e., to increase certain behaviors) and not negative terms (i.e., to decrease behaviors.) Do you see any implications to the parent-Head Start worker relationship for the language used with parents? Think about other ways the goal could be stated and what messages the language conveys.*

☐ *Are there questions you might ask James to help him identify his goals?*

☐ *Are there other goals you might suggest?*

Step 3: Select and try out an activity to support this goal.

The staff person and James decide that before they can influence David's behavior, they need to understand why he likes violent play and speech. They look through

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Handout 20: James and David (Continued)

the Head Start publication, *Our Stories Keep Us Connected*. Together they select an activity to share together called *The Stories Found in Playtime* (Handout 21). The staff person offers to bring several small dolls and animals to the next home visit to stimulate pretend play. James says he will collect boxes during the week that could be used for buildings or blocks. At the following visit, they watch David and his 5-year-old cousin play with these materials.

☐ *What is the value in jointly selecting an activity rather than having the Head Start worker just bring one next week?*

Step 4: Review what was learned from the experience.

In talking over their observations, James and the staff person realize how much of David's violent behavior is directly modeled from television shows he watches. James hadn't made the connection before. He generally does not watch television with David but rather, uses that time to get things done.

☐ *What questions could the Head Start worker ask to help James make sense of his observations?*

☐ *How could the Head Start worker help a parent use observation in ways that can benefit the child and the parent-child relationship over time?*

Step 5: Plan new activities to support the goal (or focus on a new goal).

With the help of the staff person, James makes a plan to monitor the shows David watches and to restrict viewing of shows with violent content. James also commits to watching with David whenever the TV is on, to mediate what his son is seeing. James is not sure how to talk with David about violence in ways that open up rather than close down communication. The staff person shares a tip from his experience as a parent. When David asks for something in a way James is uncomfortable with (for example, "hand it over, dummy head,") James can try saying, "Ask me in a way that makes me want to give it to you." If David can't come up with a response, James can offer one: "Try, I'd like the spoon please." James is pleased to have the suggestion. He and the staff person decide that at the next visit, they will look through some Head Start publications to find communication activities he can use with his son.

☐ *How can you tell if the plan is working?*

☐ *What does the parent gain in co-planning visits?*

☐ *What does the Head Start worker gain in co-planning home visits?*

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Handout 21: The Stories Found in Playtime*

THE STORIES FOUND IN PLAYTIME

Children learn by playing out what they've seen happening around them. By watching them play, parents can see what their children are thinking about the world.

TRY THIS

Next time you see your children (of any age) pretend-playing alone or with other children, spend some time watching their actions and listening to their words. Although sometimes you might feel like stepping in and redirecting, this time just try to figure out where their ideas are coming from.

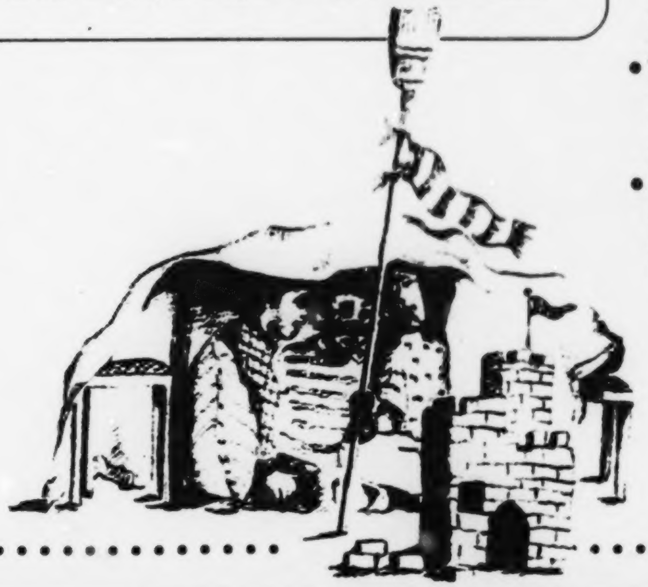
Who do they pretend to be? Is it anyone you know? Where did your children meet or see these people?

How are they acting? Do you like the way your children act when they pretend to be these characters? How do you feel about the way they treat others in this role? Do you like the feelings they show?

How do they handle problems in the scenes they act out? by using ideas they've seen in other places? by coming up with their own ideas? by working out solutions with their friends?

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Your children's play may be different at Head Start than it is at home. To get someone else's view, compare notes with your children's teachers. Watch your children play at school if you can.
- To develop their creativity, give your children chances to invent their own play *without* toys. Ask your Head Start teacher for ideas.
- Watch to see how your baby learns to play with toys. Is he or she trying anything you showed him or her how to do?



Handout 22: Planning Home Visits

Plan and conduct an instructional family learning visit, using this five-step process:

Step 1: Determine the family's interests, concerns, and goals.

Step 2: Focus on a learning goal (this can be either a goal the parent has for a child or for himself or herself).

Step 3: Select and try out an activity to support this goal.

Step 4: Review what was learned from the activity.

Step 5: Plan new activities to support the goal (or focus on a new goal).

Note: It may take one or more initial home visits just to accomplish Steps 1 and 2. For example, in order to identify goals, you may want to spend one or more home visits working through some of the activities in previous modules of this guide. Or, you may want to spend that time looking through publications for appropriate family learning activities.

Handout 23: How Well Do We Support Family Literacy?

How would you rate your program in terms of how it supports family literacy (or collaborates with other service providers to offer this support)? Read the statements below and for each statement rate your program anywhere from one to five stars.

(1 ★=poorly; 5 ★'s=fantastic)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★	We provide parents with the opportunity to learn the social significance of literacy and its value to them and their children.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	We provide opportunities for parents to work independently and as a group on their own reading and writing.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	We provide early childhood education to their children which supports their emerging literacy.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	We provide opportunities for parents to use literacy to address family and community problems.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	We provide a nurturing and supportive environment in which parents can address and share their child-rearing concerns.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	We provide multiple opportunities for parents to participate with their young children in activities that foster literacy for both.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	We provide a place for parents to raise school-related issues and develop the ability to understand and respond to them.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	We provide parents with the opportunity to gather information and resources about child development and learning that will assist them in supporting their children's literacy development.

How many ★'s did you get? ________
(Total number = 40 ★'s)

Handout 24: Literacy Building Activities

1. How do parents create a home that is rich in reading and writing materials?
   (Example: They have books in the home.)

2. What are the different ways that parents read, tell, and/or write stories with children?
   (Example: They create a family story-book.)

3. How can adult family members model the everyday uses of reading and writing?
   (Example: They use bus schedules.)

4. How can adult family members express positive attitudes toward education?
   (Example: They attend a class themselves.)

Module 4

Advocating for Quality Care

Outcomes

As a result of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify the factors they associate with quality in a child care setting.
- Increase advocacy skills by critically evaluating children's learning environments outside the home.
- Increase awareness of community resources in order to support and enrich family learning environments.
- Become better consumers of services by matching family needs and preferences to quality services.

Key Concepts

- Knowing how to be a critical consumer of child care services is a valuable skill that parents will use throughout their lifetime.
- There are many variables that determine quality in child care.
- There is no one "best" child care setting. Each family must decide what is best, based on their own needs and preferences and available options.
- Head Start staff, together with parents, can strengthen community supports for quality child care.

Background Information

Head Start has long been a leader in the field in promoting high standards of quality for the care of young children. Programs use a variety of strategies to promote quality in child care including: modeling quality practice, investing in staff development for caregivers, working collaboratively with others in the community to provide wrap-around services for children, and by supporting parents as advocates for quality care. This module focuses on how Head Start can support parents as they advocate for quality child care. (See the index for the National Training guides for information and training related to Head Start's other roles in promoting quality child care.)

While many of a family's needs for child care can be met within the Head Start program, there are times when families may need to look elsewhere. Before and after school care, night and weekend care are some examples of times when parents may need to look at caregivers beyond Head Start. Head Start can support parents in their efforts to access quality child care by helping parents become informed and critical consumers. When parents are informed consumers they are more likely to become strong advocates for themselves, their family, and the community.

This module begins supporting parents as critical consumers by defining quality in early childhood care settings. To early childhood professionals, quality has generally been defined as a commitment to providing: developmentally appropriate curriculum for children; quality interactions among children and staff; a healthy, safe environment for children; a sufficient number of adults per children in group sizes appropriate for the children's ages; and strong communication between parents and staff.

In an ideal world, all programs would meet the optimal standards of quality. However, in the real world, there is a range of quality. Often, parents must make trade-offs in choosing programs for their children. Take, for example, a community offering three options for toddlers. A parent identifies one as being of higher quality than the others. This program, however, is on the other side of town and is the most expensive. One program, with fewer resources, has caregivers who speak Spanish, the native language of the family. The closest and least expensive option is not licensed, though it is used by many neighborhood families. The outdoor space is not adequately fenced and faces a busy street, and there are too many children for the single caregiver. Quality itself is but one piece of the child care puzzle for this family.

As with choosing child care, parents are making choices about other community services (e.g., adult education) and must weigh the available options considering their family's needs and preferences. Quality, convenience, and fit are all important considerations. Head Start can play a role in helping parents think through these factors.

Parents who have become smart consumers often discover that their community does not have exactly what they want. For example, they may locate a child care program that they think is excellent — except for the fact that the hours are too limited. Or, they may want to take a GED class at the local high school, but they really need on-site child care. In such cases, Head Start can play a role in helping parents work collaboratively with other community members to advocate for changes in existing services or for new services.

Activity 4-1: Defining Quality in Child Care (W)

Purpose
Participants will reflect on the characteristics that define a high quality child care setting, and consider how they could organize information on these characteristics into a useful format for parents.

Materials

Handout 25: *Turning Ideas Into Print*; a brochure or resource from a state or local agency describing features of quality child care; sticky dots in two colors; chart paper; markers.

Trainer Preparation Notes
The categories used for evaluating child care options in this activity are taken from a sample state brochure (this brochure is included in the appendix). You may want to select a local or state brochure more relevant for participants. The sample you select should reflect what research suggests constitutes quality (e.g., group size and ratios, qualities of caregivers and environment, the involvement of parents and health and safety standards, etc.).

Prior to the workshop, write the category headings from your sample resource on chart paper and place them on the walls around the room. For example, if you were using the brochure in the appendix, the category headings would be: *The Caregiver*, *The Environment*, *The Program*, *Nutrition Health*, *Safety*, and *Open Door Policy*.

Process

Begin by stating that Head Start has long been a leader in the field in promoting quality care settings for young child. Programs use a variety of strategies to promote quality care including: modeling quality practice, investing in training for caregivers, working collaboratively with other others in the community to increase access to child care, and by supporting parents as advocates.

Ask participants to reflect for a moment on the different ways their program uses some of these strategies. After participants have time to reflect, ask volunteers to share some of their ideas. Record the ideas on chart paper.

Once the list is completed, ask participants to review the list carefully and respond to this question:

> *Despite our best efforts, are there times when some of our Head Start families must look else where for services?*

Some suggested responses could include:

- care for young siblings
- before or after school care for older siblings
- evening or weekend child care
- child care during school vacations.

Continue the activity by stating that if some of the child care services needed are beyond the program Head Start, thus an important role in helping parents become informed and critical consumers of child care services. Selecting child care is one of the more important decisions parents make, affecting both the development of the child and the well-being of the family. A wealth of information is available to help parents make the right choice. However, parents may not know where to find this information or how to make use of it. Head Start staff can play an important role in helping families evaluate their child care options.

Note that organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and many states have published guidelines and information on what to look for in child care. Tell participants that their task in this activity is not to "recreate the wheel" but to:

- Consider how to make the information already available more accessible and more personalized for the parents they serve.
- Add parents' perspectives to the definition of quality.

A critical first step in this task will be to bring parents' voices into the process. Divide participants into two groups. Direct half of the participants to do this activity from the parents' point of view, and direct the other half to take on the staff's point of view. Encourage participants to keep their assigned role in mind when they decide what quality child care means to them. Distribute markers to all participants.

Provide participants with copies of a sample brochure on what to look for in a quality child care setting. Point out the chart paper taped around the room and review the headings listed on each piece of paper. Explain that their task is to think about what qualities they would expect in each category if they were looking for a good child care arrangement. For example:

The caregiver: warm and loving
The environment: clean, light
The program: includes story-reading
Nutrition, health, and safety: there are working fire detectors
Open door policy: parents can drop in anytime
Accessibility and convenience: it is close to my work.

Encourage participants to read the information in the brochure and think about how to put it in their own words. Also encourage them to think about characteristics of quality that are not in the brochure but that are important to them.

Ask participants to move around the room, writing one to three characteristics of quality that they think are important on each piece of chart paper. Suggest that participants add new ideas to each list rather than repeating an idea that has already been recorded.

After everyone has finished, ask them to sit down and review the lists. Then tell participants their next task is to vote on the five most important characteristics of quality within each category. Provide each participant with five sticky dots per category; give one color of dots to "parents" and another color to "staff." Have participants move from paper to paper, selecting their top five choices in each category by placing sticky dots next to them.

When voting is finished, ask:

> *Which characteristics of quality are considered most important by both staff and parents?*
>
> *Are there indicators that one group, but not both, considers most important?*
>
> *Does this voting tell us anything about the importance of parent's opinions when preparing materials for them?*

Divide participants into small groups. Direct them to use the information gathered in this exercise to consider how they could develop a checklist, brochure, poster, or community resource directory to help parents evaluate child care options. Distribute Handout 25: *Turning Ideas Into Print*, and direct groups to use the questions on this handout to guide their discussion. Allow 45-60 minutes for small group discussions.

Have a volunteer from each small group give a summary of their discussion. Have groups commit to a next step for developing their resources. Encourage groups to combine efforts, if they so desire.

Debriefing

Summarize by stating that while this activity used a brochure as a way of bringing in parents' concerns, it is but a starting point. Parents' ideas and concerns must be continually heard in order to individualize choices for families.

Trainer Preparation Notes:
If you want to extend this activity and have participants prepare their resources, you may want to direct them to activities from Module 3, "Using Plain Language Writing" in the guide *Communicating with Parents*.

Conclude the activity by reminding participants of the following:

- There are many characteristics that need to be considered when choosing quality child care. For example, the needs of infants and toddlers are different than those of older children.
- Different families will want and need different child care arrangements. No single child care arrangement, regardless of its quality, will work for all families.
- For parents to be able to select child care that works best for the child and for them, they need to know what constitutes good care for children, what options are available to them, and how to evaluate these options.
- Head Start staff can play an important role in helping families evaluate their child care options. To do this successfully, they must be familiar with the quality of child care options available in their community.

Activity 4-2: Considering Child care Choices (C)

Purpose
Participants will identify elements of quality child care settings and use the information to make informed decisions when selecting child care.

Materials

Handout 26: *Considering Child Care Choices*; pens or pencils.

Process

Coach Preparation Notes:
For this activity, team up with one or more parents who are looking for child care.

Begin by asking participants to reflect for a moment about their own experience as a child. Ask them to think about who cared for them before or after school or when their parents worked (or went out). Think about what that experience was like — what was enjoyable and what was difficult. Then ask participants to think about what type of care experience they would want for their own children.

After participants have had an opportunity to reflect, introduce this activity by stating that (as a small group) you will be expanding your consumer skills in regard to selecting child care.

Continue by presenting the following:

- Decisions about child care are complex and personal. For any family, there will be no perfect option. Each will have its advantages and its drawbacks.
- While we now know a great deal about what makes for quality child care, standard measures of quality are not always enough to make good matches for all families.
- Factors such as cost, convenience, flexibility, and style, as well as the family's comfort level, all work together to make some programs a good fit and others not.
- In two important ways, Head Start staff can serve as a resource to parents who are searching for child care: they can help parents become familiar with characteristics of quality, and they can help parents match their needs and preferences to the good options that are available.

Provide participants with Handout 26: *Considering Child Care Choices*. Read through the questions on page one and two of the handout. Then, have participants work individually, or as a group, reflecting and writing down responses to each question.

When participants have finished, continue the activity by stating that one way to gather information about a child care setting is by observing the setting. Using their responses on pages one and two as a guide, have participants discuss what they need to do when they visit a child care setting to observe it. Then refer participants to page three of the handout. Have them write down or discuss five important observations they need to make for each category on the handout.

Once this exercise is completed, have participants make arrangements to observe at least two different child care settings (with or without you, as they prefer). As needed, guide participants in making appointments to visit and arranging transportation and child care.

Encourage them to bring pages one through three with them to use as tools for their observations. Set a time and place to get together afterward to talk about the observations.

Debriefing

Ask participants to share the information they gathered from observing different child care settings. Using page four of Handout 26: *Considering Child Care Choices*, work together to think through the advantages and drawbacks of each setting. Discuss the following:

> *If you had to make a choice between one of the settings you observed, which one would it be? Why?*
>
> *What can you do, as an individual or with others, to help turn that setting's weaknesses into strengths?*

Make the following points in summarizing the activity:

- All families deserve a basic level of quality in the child care arrangements they use.
- There is no perfect child care setting: for any particular family, all quality programs have advantages and drawbacks.
- To make the right child care choice, parents need to reflect on their family's needs and preferences.

Activity 4-3: Locating Resources (W)

Purpose
Participants will identify community resources that support family learning.

Materials

A large open room, masking tape, markers and colored paper for signs and landmarks, chart paper, colored dots.

Trainer Preparation Notes:
Prior to the meeting, draw the community boundaries on a large piece of paper to be taped to the wall. Decide on the community boundaries (e.g., the area around the Head Start Center, the neighborhood in which participating families live, etc.) based on the participant group.

Process

Begin the activity by explaining that every community has resources that support family learning. Some resources are formal (for example, public libraries or adult education programs) while others are informal and personal (for example, parents exchanging information when they meet at the park or bulletin boards at the grocery store).

Refer participants to the chart paper map. Ask the group to suggest land marks to add to the map. Be sure to locate the Head Start Center and any other places important to the group (e.g., each participant's home). Keep markers available to add more places as the activity progresses.

Tell them you are going to read a list of questions. For each question they may call out a location in their community where they might go for an answer. Ask for a volunteer to place dots on the map to indicate participants' responses.

Begin with the questions below, adding any that you think would be appropriate for the group with whom you are working.

> *Where would you go if you wanted to further your own education?*
>
> *Where would you go for information on parenting?*
>
> *Where would you go to get books for yourself? for your child?*
>
> *Where would you go to get educational toys for your child?*
>
> *Where would you take your child for a learning experience?*

Where would you go so that both you and your child learn something new?

Where would you go to find child care?

Where would you go to find your friends? to meet new people who share your interests?

Where would you go to get a question answered about your child's behavior? your child's health?

Where would you go to get help to advocate for changes in services?

Pause after each question has been answered and summarize the responses by naming each one and asking:

What makes this a good resource?

Would you refer other parents to this resource?

After completing the activity, lead a group discussion about the process. What did they learn about the formal and informal networks in their community that support family learning? How often was Head Start used as a resource by participants?

Make the point that parents know a lot about how to "work" the community to get the supports they need. Lead a discussion on what Head Start can do to help parents share their insights into community resources with each other.

Next, ask participants to consider what this activity revealed in terms of community supports for families that are weak or missing? Ask what they as individuals or Head Start can do to strengthen these supports?

Debriefing

Summarize by making the following points:

- Most families use a combination of formal and informal resources to support their families' learning needs.
- In creating a list of community resources it is important to include parents' perceptions about where to go for information and support.

- Head Start can play a pivotal role in linking families to services and helping communities build and strengthen those services.

Activity 4-4: Researching Good Resources (C)

Purpose

Participants will research where families go for information and/or resources in support of family learning environments. They will consider ways that Head Start can share information about good resources.

Materials

Handout 27: *Where Do You Go?*; chart paper, markers, pens or pencils.

Process

Select four participants (either parents, staff, or a combination of both) to work together as a team of "researchers" for this activity. Introduce them to the activity by stating that every community has resources that support family learning.

Sometimes these resources are part of the "formal" community network (e.g., public library, adult education programs). Others are informal, often personal, networks. Both types of networks are important for families.

The task for the team will be first to collect information on how Head Start parents use resources within the community and then to decide how to share the information with others.

The team will be collecting information for this activity by interviewing parents. The first step in completing their task is to "pilot" (or try out) the interview questions on each other. Explain that piloting the interview helps them become more comfortable with the questions and will give them some information about resources they can later use as examples.

Distribute Handout 27: *Where Do You Go?* to participants and ask them to fill out page 1 of the handout. Remind participants that they may not have an answer for every question and that "I don't know" or "this question doesn't apply to me" are okay answers. Allow them 10-15 minutes to do this part of the task.

When participants have finished page 1, ask them to share their responses with each other. Ask for a volunteer to record the responses. Lead the group in a discussion about the interview questions (e.g., Were any of the questions confusing?) and decide if any question should be changed. If the group decides to make changes, adapt pages 2 and 3 of Handout 27 to incorporate their comments before proceeding with the second half of this activity. Allow time for participants to practice interviewing each other once the list of questions is finalized.

Explain that the next step in this activity will be to collect information about the use of community resources directly from parents. Provide participants with multiple copies of pages 2 and 3 of Handout 27 (or your adapted version). Ask participants to select one of the four items from the handout to focus on for their research, based on their own interests or needs. Or, have the team divide the topics so that each one is covered.

Have them circle the item they will be addressing where it appears on the top of page 2 of the handout. Then direct them to interview four parents, asking for their responses to that one item. Remind participants to collect information on the quality and usefulness of each resource mentioned by parents. Also encourage them to take notes during or after each interview. Arrange for a time and place to meet after the interviews are completed.

Debriefing

Reconvene the group. Have participants describe or summarize their research results. Record responses on chart paper. As a group look for patterns (e.g., there is one resource everyone goes to for many different types of information; there is a resource that is under-used) across the different topics.

Ask the group if they have enough good information to share with other parents and staff. If the team feels that they do not, encourage them to develop a plan for collecting more information (e.g., interview more parents or change some questions). If the team feels they have enough information to share, encourage the team to brainstorm how to share the information. Develop an action plan to implement either decision.

Next Steps

Serve as a mentor to parents thinking about enrolling in adult education. Using Activity 4-1 and 4-2 as models, help parents reflect on the quality of Adult Education programs, evaluate their needs and preferences, observe programs to gather information, and weigh the pro's and con's of each option. Use the Quality Consideration for Adult Education resource in the appendix as a guide for your discussion on quality.

Mentor a parent who is advocating for changes at a child care setting or other community resource.

Increasing availability and access to child care is a community issue. Using the *Community Partnership: Working Together* guide, identify activities you can use to collaborate with other community agencies and child care providers to make change happen.

If you haven't already, contact your State Child Care Resource and Referral network for information about child care in your state. All States have an R & R network that can provide a lot of information on child care resources and quality.

Create opportunities for parents to help each other find child care. For example, provide a board where parents can create a "swap-shop" for services.

Handout 25: Turning Ideas Into Print

Your task is to plan a resource for parents to help them consider child care options. Use the questions below to guide your discussion.

1. What kinds of parents would be your audience for this resource?

2. How can you get parents and staff involved in developing this resource?

3. What other information would you need to collect?

4. What formats could you use to present the information?

5. What process could you use to write a draft?

6. How can you get feedback on your draft?

7. What process could you use to revise your draft based on feedback?

8. How could you get the resource printed?

9. How would you distribute it?

10. How could you keep the resource updated?

11. To get started, what are your first steps?

Handout 26: Considering Child Care Choices

How do *you* define quality child care?

1. What makes a good caregiver?
    -
    -
    -
    -
2. What skills and training should a good caregiver have?
    -
    -
    -
    -
3. What do you want caregivers doing with your child?
    -
    -
    -
    -
4. What kinds of staff, or what adult-to-child ratio, do you think is best?
    -
    -
    -
    -
5. What activities do you want your child to be doing?
    -
    -
    -
    -
6. What is important to you in terms of meals, snacks, or bottle feedings for your child?
    -
    -
    -
    -

page 1 of 4

Handout 26: Considering Child Care Choices (Continued)

7. How do you want the caregivers to keep order (to discipline)?
   -
   -
   -
   -

8. What do you want the child care setting to look like?
   -
   -
   -
   -

9. How can you tell if a child care setting is safe?
   -
   -
   -
   -

10. How can you tell if your child is happy and learning at a child care setting?
   -
   -
   -
   -

11. How could you tell if a child care setting is not a good place for your child?
   -
   -
   -
   -

Handout 26: Considering Child Care Choices (Continued)

Work together with your coach to develop a plan for observing a child care setting.

LOOK

For example, does this setting look safe for your child?

☐
☐
☐
☐

LISTEN

For example, how does the teacher talk to the children?

☐
☐
☐
☐

COUNT

For example, how many children are there? How many teachers?

☐
☐
☐
☐

ASK

For example, ask the teacher, "how do you communicate with parents?"

☐
☐
☐
☐

FIND OUT MORE:

For example, get the names of parents you can contact for a reference.

Handout 26: Considering Child Care Choices (Continued)

Instructions: Write the name of the child care setting you observed on the line below. Then check a response for each statement. Use a separate copy of this form for each setting.

Child care Setting: ______________________________

	agree	not sure	disagree
1. I liked the caregivers.	☐	☐	☐
2. The caregivers have good skills and training.	☐	☐	☐
3. The caregivers do the right things with the children.	☐	☐	☐
4. The adult-to-child ratio is good.	☐	☐	☐
5. My child will be engaged in the right activities.	☐	☐	☐
6. They do a good job with meals, snacks, or bottle feedings.	☐	☐	☐
7. The caregivers keep order (discipline) the way I would want them to.	☐	☐	☐
8. I like the looks of the child care setting.	☐	☐	☐
9. The place is safe for children.	☐	☐	☐
10. I believe my child would be happy and learn here.	☐	☐	☐
11. I believe this would be a good place for my child.	☐	☐	☐

page 4 of 4

Handout 27: Where Do You Go?

Review the questions below. Write your responses in the space below each question.

1. **If you needed information on child care...**

   ...what person could you turn to and why?

   ...what materials could you turn to and why?

   ... what places could you turn to and why?

2. **If you wanted to learn, see, or do something new with your children....**

   ...what person could you turn to for ideas and why?

   ...what materials could you turn to for ideas and why?

   ... what places could you turn to and why?

3. **If you wanted to help your child's progress at Head Start or at school...**

   ...what person could you turn to and why?

   ...what materials could you turn to and why?

   ... what places could you turn to and why?

4. **If you wanted to further your own education...**

   ...what person could you turn to and why?

   ...what materials could you turn to and why?

   ... what places could you turn to and why?

page 1 of 3

Handout 27: Where Do You Go? (Continued)

Instructions: Circle the item below that you will focus on for your research. Then interview four parents to find out what resources they use to help them with this issue.

1. **If you needed information on child care...**
2. **If you wanted to learn, see or do something new with your children...**
3. **If you wanted to help your child's progress at school...**
4. **If you wanted to further your own education...**

Parent 1

...what person could you turn to and why?

...what materials could you turn to and why?

... what places could you turn to and why?

Parent 2

...what person could you turn to and why?

...what materials could you turn to and why?

... what places could you turn to and why?

Handout 27: Where Do You Go? (Continued)

Parent 3

...what person could you turn to and why?

...what materials could you turn to and why?

... what places could you turn to and why?

Parent 4

...what person could you turn to and why?

...what materials could you turn to and why?

... what places could you turn to and why?

page 3 of 3

Continuing Professional Development

Supporting parents as their child's first and life-long teacher requires staff to have a range of knowledge and skills about child development and about empowering families. The approaches below are suggestions for building on and expanding the skills introduced in this guide:

- Increase your knowledge and skills as an early childhood educator by:
  - **Entering the CDA (Child Development Associate)** Program. Ask your Head Start Director for more information about the CDA program in your area and what types of financial support might be available for Head Start staff and/or parents. Information about the program is also available from the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition at 1-800-424-4310 or by writing the Council at 2460 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009-3575.
  - Consulting catalogues and course information sheets from local community colleges and universities. Many institutions offer courses in child development and early childhood education that have direct relevance to the skills addressed in this training guide.
  - Network with other early childhood educators by attending local, regional and national workshops and institutes sponsored by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).
  - Expand your Head Start library to include subscriptions of journals targeted at early childhood educators (e.g., *Young Children*) or visit your local library to explore their resources.
- Continue to refine your skills working with parents through home visits. Home visitor training is often offered through State Departments of Social Service or other community agencies.
- Form a committee of staff and parents to expand literacy opportunities in your community. For example:
  - Work with the local **Adult Basic Education** agency and explore the possibility of setting up a self-paced learning program using materials from the *Training Guides for the*

  Head Start Learning Community as part of the preparation course work for either a High School Diploma or GED. Consider using the Head Start center as a site for adult education training.

  - **Become a literacy volunteer.** Investigate the local opportunities to become involved in family literacy efforts. The public library and adult education programs are good starting points. Investigate how volunteers are used and sign up for training as it is offered.

- **Become your own researcher.** Every day more information becomes available through the World Wide Web. Use the search engines on your computer to locate resources and information on topics such as "parenting" and "parent-child activities." If you need assistance using a computer or accessing the World Wide Web, support is available through most public libraries and through local school systems.

The following list of materials and organizations are just a few of the many resources available to help you in your efforts to support family learning environments.

Head Start Materials

Refer to the Head Start Publication Center catalogue for more information about the following Head Start resources:

The Head Start Bulletin
Exploring Parenting
Our Stories Keep Us Connected
Fun and Learning for Parents and Children
Looking At Life
The Library-Head Start Partnership video

Child Care

The Child Care Bulletin publishes a range of articles about child care practice and policy. It is published six times a year by the National Child Care Information Center under the direction of the Child Care Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Human Services. The National Child Care Information Center may be accessed at 301 Maple Ave. West, Suite 602. Vienna, VA 22180. By phone at: 1-800-616-2242 or TTY: 1800-516-2242. Internet access to the National Child Care Information Center is: http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/nccic/nccichome.html.

Child Care Choices, Consumer Education and Low Income Families. A. Mitchell, E. Cooperstein, and M. Larner. (1992). A monograph that examines research on families' child care preferences; explores how state and local programs educate consumers about child care. Available for $5.50 from NCCP, Attention: Publications. 154 Haven Ave., New York, NY 10032.

Child Care that Works is a parent's guide to finding quality child care, written by Eva and Mon Cochran. It provides an overview of different types of care and how to find them, strategies for staying in touch with children in care, building partnerships and advocacy. This 355 page book could be an useful tool for practitioners to use as a reference guide when developing information or training tools for parent groups. The book is published in 1997 by Houghton Mifflein Co. (ISBN 0-395-82287-4) and can be ordered through most local bookstores.

Consumers and Child Care: An Annotated Bibliography. (1992). A. Mitchell. Describes books, articles, and reports about parental preferences and consumer education efforts about child care. Available for $3.00 from NCCP, Attention: Publications. 154 Haven Ave., New York, NY 10032.

Parents Speak About Child Care is a study exploring the findings that emerged from focus groups of parents talking about their child care experiences. The original project was funded by the Dayton Hudson foundation, Mervyn's, Target Stores, Dayton's Hudson's and Marshall Fields to inform their national consumer-education campaign, *Child Care Aware*. To order the study, send $10 to Wheelock College Family Child Care Project. 200 The Riverway, Boston, MA 02215.

Stepping Stones to Using Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards for Out-of-Home Child Care (1997). A document sponsored by Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, Public Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is designed to identify those standards most needed for the prevention of injury, morbidity and mortality in child care settings. It is available from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care at 1-800-598-KIDS or writing: National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care. University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, 4200 East 9th Ave., Box C-287, Denver CO 80262. The book is also available on the National Resource Center's website: http://nrc.uchsc.edu

Family Literacy

Commissioned Papers for Even Start Project Managers is a series of papers written for those who are (or will be) directing a family literacy program, including Even Start. Topics include: *Parenting: Supporting Parents within a Family Literacy Perspective* (ED405076) by Dr. Douglas Powell, Purdue University; *Home Visiting: Forging the Home-School Connection* (ED405075), by Mildred Winter, Parents As Teachers National Center; *Adult Education: Profiles in Diversity and Strength* (ED405081), by Dr. Gail Weinstein-Shr, San Francisco State University; *Transitions: Closing the Gaps* (ED405080), by Dr. Mary Ellin Logue, RMC Research; and *Integration: Making the Pieces Fit* (ED405079), by M. Christine Dwyer, RMC Research and Bonnie Lash-Freeman, National Center for Family Literacy. Each paper provides an overview of the research related to the topic and illustrates a range of promising practices within family literacy programs. The series of papers is available through the ERIC system.

Family Literacy: Directions in Research and Implications for Practice is a series of authored papers summarizing presentations from a Department of Education symposium. It includes information on innovative family literacy programs and practices and contains "user-friendly" research that is especially important in the emerging field of family literacy. Edited by Ann Benjamin and Jerome Lord, it is available through the U.S.

Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

The *Guide to Quality Even Start Family Literacy Programs* by M. Christine Dwyer captures what has been learned about the characteristics of effective Even Start Family Literacy Programs. This information guide and self assessment workbook is useful for programs considering expanding services to include family literacy or to those in collaboration with Even Start programs. The guide and self assessment workbook are available through ERIC: ED 390 087.

Home visiting

The *Center for the Future of Children* disseminates timely information on major issues related to children's well being. One of their journals is on home visiting. Entitled *Home Visiting* (Vol. No 3, Winter 1993) this journal contains a number of articles from multi-disciplinary perspectives. Topics range from lessons from research to promising practices. Copies can be obtained from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, Center for the Future of Children, 300 Second Street, Los Altos, CA 94022-3621.

Exploring Family Strengths is a video by Jana Stanton. It is part of the Listening to Families Project developed through a grant with the U.S. Department of Education. The examples of conversations between families and family consultants demonstrate many of the skills important to home visitors wishing to work with families in a partnership approach. The video is available through Child Development Media, Inc., 5632 Van Nuys Boulevard, Suite 2687, Van Nuys, CA 91401. In addition to this video Child Development Media, Inc. lists a number of other resources related to home visiting in their catalogue of training materials.

Parent/Child Activities

Links to Learning by Dr. Douglas Powell is a parenting program designed to strengthen family contributions to children's learning. The program emphasizes the use of parent-child conversations and activities to improve problem-solving skills. Targeted at parents with elementary aged children, the program includes activities on partnerships with schools and other community organizations. Training activities in this resource can be easily adapted to parents of preschool children or used when preparing Head Start parents for their child's transition to schools. A facilitator guide, parent discussion guides and a source book are all sold separately. *Links to Learning* can be purchased through the Child Development and Family Studies

Department at Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1267 or by phoning 765-494-9878.

Mudpies to Magnets: A Preschool Science Curriculum was written by Robert A. Williams as a resource for preschool teachers. However, many of the activities can easily be adapted for use in home visits, for parenting workshops, or activities that can be extended into a family learning environment. The book is published by Gryphon House, Inc., Mt. Rainier, MD and can be ordered through your local bookstore.

The Ready Set Read Kit by the U.S. Department of Education is targeted at families with children birth-five. It includes an activity books, activity calendar and early childhood growth chart. Print copies can be obtained by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN or by downloading information from the Department's website: http://www.ed.gov.

Writing Begins At Home is a book by Marie Clay. It is a valuable resource for practitioners working with parents of preschool children. It provides samples of children's "writing" at various stages of development. The book also provides suggestions for how parents can support and expand writing with a home learning environment. *Writing Begins at Home* is published by Heinemann Publishers of Portsmouth, NH and can be ordered through your local bookstore.

Organizations

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a nationwide information network designed to provide users with access to education literature. ERIC Clearinghouses provide a wealth of information about literacy learning and parent/child activities. Use the following clearinghouses as a starting point for discovering additional resources:

- ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
  The Ohio State University
  1900 Kenny Road
  Columbus, OH 43210-1090
  Phone: 614-292-4353
  Toll free: 800-848-4815
  Fax: 614-292-1260
  E-mail: ericacve@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu
  URL: http://coe.ohio-state.edu/cete/ericacve/index.htm

- ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/PS)

Appendices

CHILD CARE CHECKLIST

Basic Information:

- Hours suitable
- Fees affordable
- Meals and snacks nutritious
- Transportation available
- Acceptable group size and age group information

Staff:

- Warm, friendly, gentle, calm, relaxed
- Acceptable disciplinary methods
- Responsive and supportive of children and parents
- Children treated as individuals
- Children comforted when needed
- How long has the provider been caring for children and how long does (s)he plan to continue?

Setting and Program:

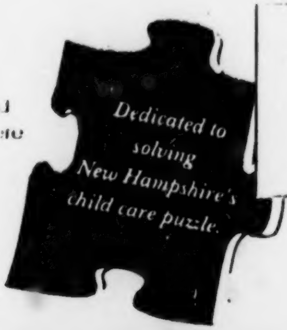
- Bright and cheerful
- Children responsive and happy
- Adequate supply of toys which are safe and age appropriate
- Space available for quiet, active and outdoor play
- TV is limited or not used
- Caregiver active in the program
- Home or center safe
- Provides stimulating activities
- Children get things for themselves, self help skills encouraged
- Group and individual age appropriate activities available

Parents Involved:

- Open door policy
- Parents involved in decisions
- Parents encouraged to participate
- Staff/parent communication opportunities available daily

Overall Impression

- Positive references provided
- I would be happy here if I were a child
- I feel comfortable leaving my child here



List of Agencies

Child Care & Company
Education Department Plymouth State College
Plymouth, NH 03264
(603) 535 2633

Child Care Project
1 McNutt Hall, Hanover NH 03755
(603) 646 3233

Child Care Services Office
City of Nashua
18 Mulberry Street, Nashua, NH 03060
(603) 594 3369

Families Matter in Carroll County
Box 892, Center Ossipee, NH 03814
(603) 539 8223

Family Works of Child & Family Services of NH
99 Hanover Street, Manchester NH 03101
1 800 640 6486 (in NH) or (603) 668 1920

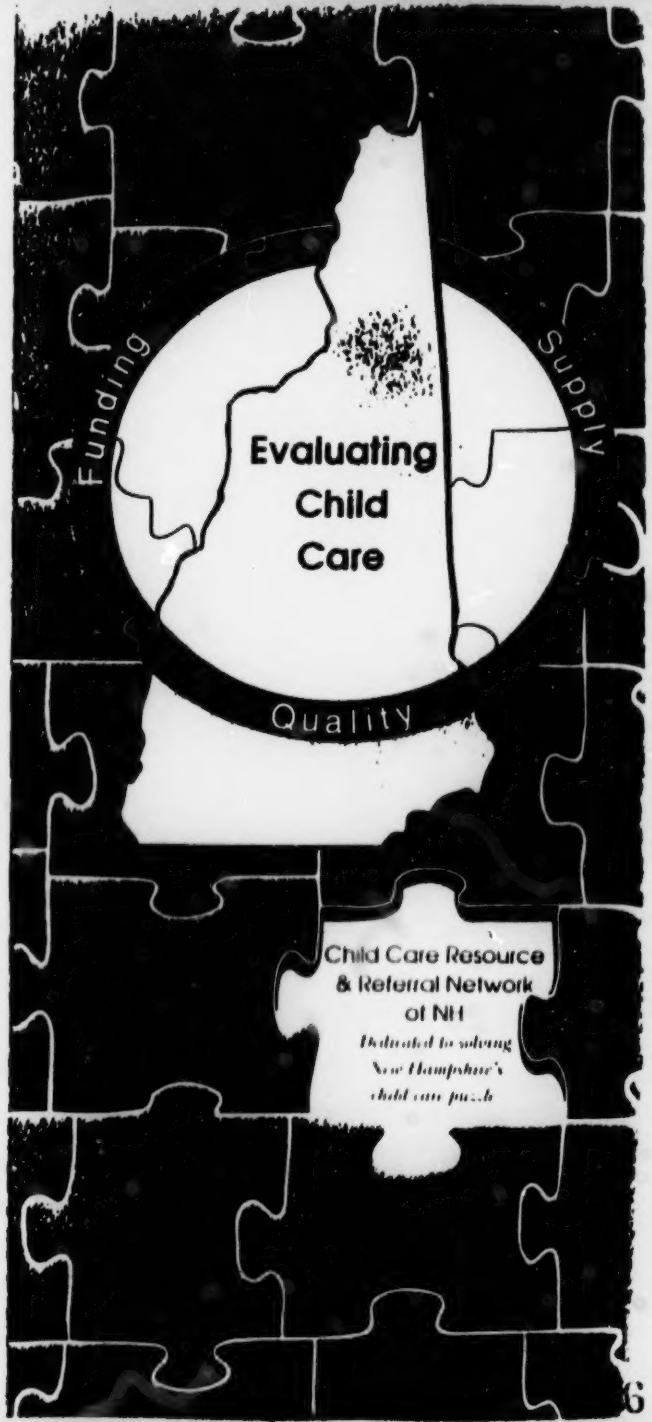
Family Works of Child & Family Services of NH
500 Amherst Road, Nashua 03063
(603) 889 7189

Child Care Services of Coos County
300 Gorham Hill Road, Gorham, NH 03581 4849
(603) 466 5437

Rockingham Community Action
Program's Child Care Services
8 Centerville Drive, Salem, NH 03079
(603) 893 8413

University of New Hampshire
Child Care Resource & Referral
O'Kane House, Durham, NH 03824
(603) 862 2895

A publication of the
Child Care Resource & Referral Network of NH
99 Hanover St., Manchester NH 03101
Ph.# (603)668-1920 or 800/640 6486
Child & Family Services is fiscal agent
for the CCR&R Network



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SEARCHING FOR CHILD CARE

Searching for child care can be challenging, involving a great deal of time, effort and frustration. Getting started on the right foot can make a difference.

To decide what type of care is most appropriate for your family, take time to consider the qualities that you are looking for in a child care giver. Many parents find it helpful to make a written list and prioritize it.

It is also important to familiarize yourself with the licensing regulations. In New Hampshire, call 1 800 862 3345 ext. 4624.

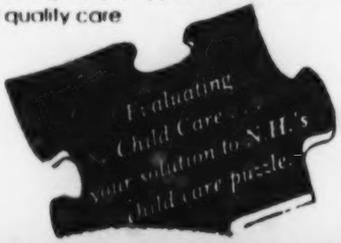
To locate a provider, check newspaper advertisements, call a local resource and referral agency or check in the phone book. Many people also rely on word of mouth, so talking with friends, neighbors and colleagues is very important. Some parents place an advertisement in the paper.

After identifying potential providers, make an appointment to visit with them. Some people find it helpful to write down questions prior to the visit. When you arrive, take notice of the environment, inquire about the staff/provider qualifications and ask about their views on discipline and their philosophy of child care.

When you have found a provider who meets your family's needs, take time to call their references, check back with the provider to confirm your interest and make a drop in visit. Some centers and family day care providers may need to put you on a waiting list. Others may require an initial deposit.

Many providers will either have a handbook or a contract that will spell out the details of their program for you. If not, you should take the time to put the important things in writing (hours of operation, late fees, vacation time, sick child policies, payments, etc.). This helps to avoid misunderstandings down the road.

By prioritizing what is important to you, keeping an open mind and starting early, you put yourself in the best position to find quality care.



QUALITY INDICATORS

Research has demonstrated that the quality of child care does affect children. We know that good child care builds emotionally healthy children and poor quality child care can harm them. The caregiver, the environment and the program are the most important indicators of good quality care for young children.

The Caregiver:

A quality caregiver is the most important factor in a child care program. He or she:

- Likes children and is in tune with them.
- Comforts, gives affection and responds when a child is hurt or crying.
- Helps children deal positively with feelings of anger or fear.
- Is actively involved with children rather than directing their activities.
- Helps children learn to consider others' rights.
- Is sensitive to individual styles.
- Talks with, rather than at the child.

Uses discipline positively:

- Sets reasonable limits for the child's age.
- Makes rules clear and is fair and consistent.
- Does not shame or belittle.
- Is not easily upset.
- Is confident when controlling behavior.

Knows how to relate to parents:

- Involves you in decisions about your child's care.
- Welcomes you to meet often with him/her.
- Helps you feel confident about yourself as a parent.
- Shares most of your attitudes and beliefs about child rearing.

TheEnvironment:

The child care space should promote the health and well being of the child. The environment should be:

- Clean and safe! Wood stoves should be fenced and out of reach, electric outlets covered, cords out of the way, fire extinguisher and smoke detectors in place.
- Well ventilated but warm enough for children to play comfortably on the floor.
- Not crowded (NH standards require a minimum of 35 square feet of usable space per child).
- Relaxing.
- The outside play area should be fenced and safe from traffic.

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The Program:

A quality child care program promotes the deve opment of young children through working an playing together. The program should:

- Balance active outdoor play and quiet indoor pla Outdoor play should be part of your child's day.
- Encourage self-help skills such as toileting an washing when the child is ready.
- Use television for only a small part of the day, if at a
- Provide opportunities for imaginative play, mus and movement, climbing, artwork, play wit blocks, etc.
- Provide a quiet or "rest" time in a comfortable plac for each child for at least one hour a day (or mor for an infant or toddler).
- Activities need to vary with the child's age.

NUTRITION

Most child care programs provide two snack (morning & afternoon) and sometimes lunch an breakfast. Ask to see what the weekly menus are an look for a variety of nutritious foods. Visit the eatin area, is it comfortable and appropriate? Find out time alloted for snacks and meals is sufficient.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

One of the hallmarks of quality care is the abilit to visit your child in her/his childcare setting at an time. Parents are clearly one of the most importan players in ensuring the quality of their children's care They not only are responsible for choosing the care but also for monitoring and evaluating the program on a daily basis. Parental access to licensed chil care programs is a guaranteed right in the state o New Hampshire. Parents should feel free to visit the program unannounced and be very cautious o places that have restrictions on visiting times. Being involved in your child's care and visiting frequently with the caregiver shows your support and helps to ensure that your selection was a wise one.

When you visit the setting, check to see if your child seems happy and talk with other parents about how their children are doing. Parents need to be able to evaluate the environment and personnel, and they can only do that through spot checks.

HOME VISITING

Challenge *To individualize the program for parents and children, building on the strengths that are apparent in familiar settings and to demonstrate that the home is the child's first and most important learning environment. Home visits increase the intensity of the program experience as well as increasing access to services for some families.*

EVEN START NOTE In Even Start, home visits are intended primarily to advance the instructional goals of the program. Social service support goals are provided primarily through collaborators. Even Start funds can be used when necessary for social service support activities.

Quality Considerations

1 All families receive home visits with an instructional focus and educational objectives. The number of visits and the length of visits vary by program model and family need. Unless the home is the primary site for services, project ideally conducts at least one home visit a month for each family, acknowledging that it may take some time in group participation for some families to be comfortable with home visits.

2 The home visit is used as an opportunity for the parent and child to learn and play together. Literacy is a primary focus of activities. The home visit supports retention of families in all components.

3 Materials and approaches for the home visits are tailored for each family. The resources and materials found in the home are the basis of activities. Home visitors build upon and adapt to the family environment, seeking transfer of home visit activities to daily interactions between parent and child.

4 Home visits are prearranged, planned and regularly scheduled. Scheduling of home visits depends on individual and family schedules. Home visitor staff and families understand the importance of the home visit and make the environment conducive to learning.

5 Parents have an active role in shaping the visit and in the debriefing of the visit. The home visitor plans with the parents activities or roles for the other adults and children who are likely to be present during the home visit.

MORE

6 The program highly values home visitor rapport with families and families' comfort with home visitor. Rapport with families in the program is key for staff selection and supervision. Home visits are conducted by a familiar service provider for continuity.

7 Staff development for home visitors includes team debriefing of experiences they have had in the home; for example, for twelve hours of direct service, approximately one hour of supervision, coaching, mentoring, is provided, including structured discussions among staff.

8 Home visiting staff view visits as an information bridge to other resources. Home visitors have backup support to link families to resources. Home visiting staff receive training in dealing with issues that may arise in the home setting, e.g., abuse, violence, substance abuse, safety in the home, and emergency procedures. Formal relationships with agencies help to address families with multiple needs.

9 Program recognizes that some families may require a transition period before they are comfortable with and committed to home visits. Temporary alternate locations such as libraries are identified in cases where the family initially is uncomfortable with the visit occurring in the home.

10 The home visit is linked to other program components.

11 Home visitors demonstrate sensitivity to family culture. Ideally, home visitors speak the first language of the family or involve collaborators who share the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of families.

12 Home visits balance parent-child relationship building, child development, and attention to parent's needs and interests.

13 Home visitors help parents to observe children and point out developmental interpretations of children's actions. Home visitors model interactions and reinforcements.

14 Home visitor staff are able to set boundaries for their roles in working with families.

15 Program coordinates home visit activities with other service providers who also make home visits to the same families.

MORE

Indications of Problems with Home Visiting

- Home visits are infrequent, occur only once or twice a year. Parents are often not at home for scheduled visit.
- There is no attempt to create a learning environment for the home visit, e.g., no attempt to deal with distractions, TV set left on, etc.
- The parent is a passive bystander during the visit.
- Visits only address child's development or adult literacy.
- Activities are independent of activities in other components of program. Home visits are considered an "add on" rather than an integral part of the program.
- Home visitors are unsure of how to deal with problems that arise during visit.
- Home visitors do not feel comfortable in home setting.
- Home visitors or parents identify cultural or linguistic barriers.
- Home visitors are focused on social service needs rather than being instructional in nature.

PRIMARY SOURCES: SEE POWELL, PARENTS AS TEACHERS, CENTER FOR FUTURE OF CHILDREN IN REFERENCE SECTION.

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ADULT EDUCATION

ADULT LITERACY

Challenge *To improve the self-sufficiency of families by enabling them to meet their goals, increasing the English language literacy levels of family members, enhancing skills and experiences related to employability, and improving parents' abilities to be advocates for and teachers of their children.*

EVEN START NOTE Eligibility under the Adult Education Act, which is necessary for Even Start eligibility of all parents except certain teen parents, includes those adults whose lack of mastery of basic skills constitutes a substantial impairment to obtaining or retaining employment commensurate with abilities, or impairs their abilities to function in society, and those who do not have a certificate of graduation from secondary school or its equivalent. Collaborations often include agencies that provide postsecondary experiences so that efforts are not duplicated.

Note: Adult Education program model indicators of quality (see OVAE in Reference section) are identified in parentheses at the end of the statements below to facilitate cross-referencing. See also sections on Recruitment and Retention for other Even Start indicators related to Adult Education model indicators.

Quality Considerations

1 Adult students have **short and long term goals** for their participation in adult education. The goals represent realistic expectations and take into consideration previous educational experiences. Those goals are expressed in a written plan and are measurable or observable. Adults' individual goals shape the program and are directly and explicitly connected to instruction. Goals are revisited periodically and progress toward goal attainment is assessed.

2 The program values **a wide variety of outcomes** (e.g., obtaining drivers' license, reading to children, obtaining high school diplomas) for adult learners.

3 Adults' progress in literacy depends on their literacy levels at program entry. Most adults make constant **progress on literacy indicators** until they exit the program. Among adults who do not obtain their high school diploma or equivalent, most continue in the program long enough to receive on average at least 70 hours of adult education prior to leaving the program. For those for whom the GED is an appropriate goal, most who enter the program at high school literacy levels obtain their high school diploma or equivalent within a year. Most who obtain their high school diploma or equivalent in the program continue to pursue other goals, including employment or continued education. (Adult Education model indicators 1 and 2)

4 Academic content is taught within a **functional context** (e.g., workplace, parenting, and/or life skills) appropriate to the lives of adult learners. Content is integrated with other components.

MORE

Adult education includes life skills, computation, and language. Language literacy includes more than reading, i.e., speaking, writing, listening, and computer skills.

5 A **mix of methods** is used for instruction, including a balance of group and individual activities. The instructional mix includes activities such as self-directed independent learning, computer-aided instruction, cooperative learning, and individual tutoring. Adult students write regularly. The program employs strategies in a flexible manner. (Adult Education model indicator 4)

6 Materials are appropriate for the **range of learner levels** represented in the program (as assessed at program entry), usually requiring a wide variety of materials. Materials are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the learners. Materials include authentic items, i.e., newspapers, forms, magazine articles, announcements, etc. Materials reflect the context of the adult student's life, including work place items. (Adult Education model indicator 4)

7 Instruction and learning activities explicitly build from learners' **prior knowledge.** Instruction emphasizes association of new learnings with daily life and encourages applications and transfer of learning to new situations. Connections are made to children's instructional programs and to the activities of home visits.

8 Program design offers maximum **flexibility** for the adult learner in terms of format, schedule, and location as well as entry options. Program actively encourages re-entry if absence from program has occurred.

9 **Staff are knowledgeable** about learning needs of adults. Staff are knowledgeable about learners' cultures and languages. Staff have good **rapport** with students and are interested in building relationships with students. Whenever possible, the Even Start program manager is involved in selection of adult education staff.

10 The learning **environment** is adult-centered, i.e., appropriate and comfortable for adults.

11 Instructors act as **resources and facilitators**, modeling problem-solving behaviors. They avoid "helping" in a way that would increase or reinforce dependency.

12 A combination of formal and informal **assessment** methods is used to identify progress and needs. Assessment is regular and frequent. Results are discussed with students and linked to learners' goals and to instructional plans. Ideally, assessments are carried out in the context of meaningful tasks. Adults understand assessment purposes, the results of assessments, and can explain their progress. Care is taken at intake so

MORE

that adults value the role of assessment; testing may not be part of initial intake if not appropriate for the adult learner. (Adult Education model indicator 4)

13 The program promotes advancement in learning beyond basic literacy. Job readiness and career exploration are a part of the curriculum. Program staff are knowledgeable about a rang of options for participants to **continue their learning and/or obtain employment**, e.g., community college, vocational programs, ties to the business community. Programs work on transition plans with adult students to meet adults' goals, including long-term goals for self-sufficiency. (Adult Education model indictor 2)

14 Program staff work with learners to remove or **reduce common barriers**, e.g., lack of child care, transportation, by identifying appropriate support services. (Adult Education model indicator 6)

15 Program services are **continuous**, including summer months, although the format of service may change in different program cycles.

16 Staff turnover is low. Learners generally have the same instructor for the program year. If staff changes occur, program ensures continuity of approach to learning.

17 Staff participate in ongoing **staff development**, including training specifically related to family literacy. Staff are familiar with parenting and early childhood staff and exchange relevant information. Ideally, they meet at least weekly to plan an integrated curriculum. (Adult Education model indicator 5)

18 Program staff are able to address the needs of adults with learning disabilities.

Indications of Problems with Adult Education/ Adult Literacy

- Adult education occurs only periodically; adult education occurs only as a by-product of home visit.
- Adult eduction is regarded by learners and by other collaborating staff as simply a fixed course, primarily workbook-based.
- The program has a view that "one size fits all" when it comes to adult literacy. Most activities do not directly or clearly relate to individual adult learners' goals. Much time is spent in whole group instruction or with drill and practice activities.

MORE

- Materials are limited in number, limited to texts, limited to a narrow band of skills, and/or not representative of learners' cultures.
- Adult students have difficulty articulating the relevance of instruction to their daily lives or to their own goals.
- Adults cannot articulate plans for continuation beyond high school equivalency.
- Adult education staff do not value the goals of the Even Start program. Adult education staff do not participate in program staff development.
- Adults who drop out of the program cite participation barriers, e.g., schedule, amount of time, child care, etc. Staff believe students are not motivated.
- Only a few adults who enter at high literacy levels receive their high school diplomas or equivalents while in the program.

PRIMARY SOURCES: SEE EVEN START EVALUATIONS, OVAE MODEL INDICATORS OF PROGRAM QUALITY FOR ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS, PELAVIN NATIONAL EVALUATION OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN REFERENCE SECTION.

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ERIC Digest

EDO-PS-93-7

Developmentally Appropriate Programs

Marjorie J. Kostelnik

The phrase *developmentally appropriate* is currently used to describe a great many early childhood education practices. This term is sometimes used to justify such incompatible notions as readiness programs that structure children's learning within narrowly defined parameters and programs that advocate giving children the gift of time by providing little or no structure. It may be used to rationalize grouping children by ability or by almost any criteria *other* than ability. These inconsistencies have led to much confusion about what developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) or programs entail (Walsh, 1991).

Debunking the Myths about DAP

In the absence of informed understanding, myths have sprung up to explain what DAP means. Some of these myths represent collective opinions that are based on false assumptions or are the product of fallacious reasoning. Others result from intuitive interpretations of child behavior or superficial understanding of child development and learning-related theories and research (Spodek, 1986). Still more myths have been created as a way for people to make finite and absolute a concept that is in fact open-ended and amenable to many variations. Some of the most common myths or erroneous assumptions about DAP are:

1. *There is only one right way to implement a developmentally appropriate program.* This belief is based on the underlying assumption that one method of teaching suits all children. On the contrary, individual teaching episodes can and should be qualified by "it depends" (Newman and Church, 1990). Practitioners need to continually weigh what they do in relation to their knowledge about how children develop and learn; examine their assumptions and learn from the children as they evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching; and search for the *best answers* (rather than one *right answer*) to meet the needs of children with a wide range of abilities, learning styles, interests, and backgrounds at a particular time and in a particular situation.

2. *Developmentally appropriate programs are unstructured and practitioners offer minimal, if any, guidance to the children in their care.* Structure refers to the extent to which teachers develop an instructional plan, then organize the physical setting and social environment to support the achievement of educational goals (Spodek, Saracho, and Davis, 1991). By this definition, developmentally appropriate classrooms are highly structured, but fluid enough to use input from the children (Newman and Church, 1990) to change the teacher's instructional plan. Children may ask questions, suggest alternatives, express interests, and develop plans that may lead the instruction in new directions so that instructional goals can be reached. Developmentally appropriate classrooms are active, but not chaotic; children are on-task, but not rigidly following a single line of inquiry. Overall instructional goals are merged with more immediate ones to create a flexible, stimulating classroom structure.

3. *In developmentally appropriate programs, the expectations for children's behavior and learning are low.* Learning can be characterized as occurring in two directions, vertically and horizontally. Vertical learning is traditional hierarchical learning, that is, piling new facts or skills on top of previously learned ones to increase the number and complexity of facts and skills attained. Horizontal learning, however, is conceptually based. In this framework, experiences occur more or less simultaneously, and the role of the learner becomes that of making connections among these experiences, which leads to an understanding of the world through the development of increasingly elaborate concepts. Both vertical and horizontal learning are essential to human understanding, but horizontal learning, also known as "concept development," tends to be neglected in traditional primary education. Because children in the early years are establishing the conceptual base from which all future learning will proceed, their need for a solid, broad foundation is great. The breadth of the conceptual base children form eventually influences their performance in school. A balance in the curriculum, with both kinds of learning addressed and valued, is a fundamental aspect of DAP. Such a balance results not in children learning *less*, but in children learning *better*.

4. *Academics have no place in developmentally appropriate programs.* Proponents and opponents of this myth in the early childhood community tend to equate academics with technical subskills or rote instruction; confuse concepts with methods; and ignore the ways in which reading, writing, and number-related behavior and understanding emerge in young children's lives. Children may manifest literacy-related behaviors and an interest in counting and calculating very early, seeking new knowledge and skills as they mature and their capacities to *know* and *do* increase. There is no specific time before or after which this learning is either appropriate or inappropriate. Programs that focus on isolated skill development and rely on long periods of whole group instruction or abstract paper-and-pencil activities are unlikely to meet the needs of young children. By contrast, those that emphasize concepts and processes, and use small group instruction and active manipulation of relevant, concrete materials and interactive learning, provide a solid foundation for academics within a context of meaningful activity.

5. *DAP is inappropriate for culturally diverse groups, for children of varying socioeconomic backgrounds, or for children with special needs.* While specific details of what is

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appropriate for children will vary from population to population and from child to child, the principles guiding developmentally appropriate programs are universally applicable. To put it another way, one might ask, For what children is it appropriate to ignore how they develop and learn? If the answer is none, then there is no group for whom the basic tents of DAP do not apply.

The Essentials of DAP

Figuring out what does or does not constitute developmentally appropriate practice requires more than debunking the myths related to DAP. It involves looking at every practice in context and making judgments about each child and the environment in which he or she is functioning. The guidelines for DAP put forward by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987), and later corroborated and embellished by organizations such as the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), provide an excellent resource for thinking about DAP. They serve to inform our decision making and to give us a basis for continually scrutinizing our professional practices. Guidelines, however, cannot be expected to tell us everything there is to know about DAP. Every day practitioners find themselves in situations in which they must make judgments about what to value and what to do.

The essence of DAP can be expressed as:

Taking into account everything we know about how children develop and learn, and matching that to the content and strategies planned for them in early childhood programs. Specialized knowledge about child development and learning is the cornerstone of professionalism in early childhood education. Such knowledge encompasses recognizing common developmental threads among all children and understanding significant variations across cultures. Teachers and caregivers with the knowledge needed to do these things are better equipped and more likely to engage in developmentally appropriate practices; more likely to accept typical variations among children and accurately recognize potential problems that may require specialized intervention; and more likely to understand the degree of developmental readiness children need to achieve particular goals.

Treating children as individuals, not as a cohort group. Practitioners are called on daily to make decisions that require them to see each child as distinct from all others. In their efforts to guide children's instruction and establish appropriate expectations, teachers and caregivers must weigh such variables as the children's experiences, knowledge and skills, age, and level of comprehension. Contextual factors, and physical resources and the amount of time available, can also affect teacher judgments.

Treating children with respect by recognizing their changing capabilities, and viewing them in the context of their family, culture, and community, and their past experience and current circumstances. Respect involves having faith in children's ability to eventually learn the information, behavior, and skills they will need to constructively function on their own. Having respect implies believing children are capable of changing their behavior and of making self-judgments. Caregivers and teachers manifest respect when they allow children to think for themselves, make decisions, work toward their own solutions to problems, and communicate their ideas. Out of respect, child care workers allow children to make choices about activities and where to sit at the lunch table. They encourage toddlers to pour their own juice, preschoolers to become actively engaged in clean-up, and school-age children to help determine the activities for the day. Respect for children's increasing competence involves allowing them to experience the exhilaration of accomplishment, and recognizing that self-control is an emerging skill that children achieve over time, given adequate support and guidance. With this in mind, children's transgressions are handled as gaps in knowledge and skills, not as character flaws.

Conclusion

Experiences planned for children and expectations for children should reflect the notion that early childhood is a time of life qualitatively different from the later school years and adulthood. Granting individual interpretation of the essence of DAP, the basic tenets outlined above provide a common foundation for defining high quality early childhood programs. Such programs are ones in which children of all abilities, ages, races, cultures, religious beliefs, socioeconomic, and family and lifestyle backgrounds feel lovable, valuable, and competent.

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ERIC DIGEST
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Dispositions as Educational Goals

Lilian G. Katz

One of the major questions to be addressed when developing a curriculum is, What should be learned? One way to answer this question (Katz, 1991) is to adopt at least four types of learning goals, those related to knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings. The acquisition of both knowledge and skills is taken for granted as an educational goal, and most educators would also readily agree that many feelings (e.g., self-esteem) are also influenced by school experiences and are thus worthy of inclusion among learning goals. However, dispositions are seldom included, although they are often implied by the inclusion of attitudes (e.g., attitudes toward learning) as goals. The main purpose of this digest is to examine the meaning of the term *disposition* and to suggest the implications of dispositions for practice.

What Are Dispositions?

It seems clear that the term *disposition* can be used to distinguish trends in behavior from skills, attitudes, traits, and mindless habits (e.g., fastening one's seat belt), and that these distinctions have useful, practical implications even in the absence of desirable precision. Concerning skills, for example, educators, and most likely other observers as well, recognize that it is possible to have skills and lack a taste for or habit of using them. Similarly, knowledge can be acquired without having the disposition to use it. Further clarification of the nature of dispositions may be obtained by distinguishing dispositions from related constructs such as thought processes, motives, and work inhibition.

For the purposes of exploring the implications of dispositions, the following tentative definition is proposed:

> A disposition is a tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed to a broad goal.

In the case of curiosity, for example, children can be said to have the disposition to be curious if they typically and frequently respond to their environment by exploring, examining, and asking questions about it. Similarly, the disposition to complain or whine would be robust if exhibited frequently, and weak if rarely exhibited. Both are examples of dispositions: they are intentional and mindfully directed toward particular objects and situations in order to achieve goals. Because not all dispositions are desirable, teaching practices must seek not only to strengthen the desirable ones, but also to weaken the undesirable ones.

Implications for Practitioners

There are several reasons for suggesting that dispositions should be included among educational goals. The most important reason is, as already mentioned, that the acquisition of knowledge and skills does not guarantee that they will be used and applied. As Cantor (1990) puts it, "having" is not necessarily "doing." For example, it is likely that most children have listening skills, but they may or may not have the disposition to be listeners. Teaching practices should take into account ways that the dispositions associated with skills can be strengthened.

Second, dispositional considerations are important because the instructional processes by which some knowledge and skills are acquired may themselves damage or undermine the disposition to use them. For example, one risk of early formal instruction in reading skills is that the amount of drill and practice required for successful reading of the English language at an early age may undermine children's dispositions to be readers (Katz, 1992).

It is clearly not useful for a child to learn skills if, in the processes of learning them, the disposition to use them is damaged. On the other hand, having the disposition to be a reader without the requisite skills would also not be desirable. Thus the acquisition of reading skills and the disposition to be a reader should be mutually inclusive goals of education.

Third, some important dispositions relevant to education, such as the disposition to investigate, may be thought of as inborn. When children's experiences support the manifestations of a disposition with appropriate scaffolding (see Rogoff, Gauvain, and Ellis, 1990) and environmental conditions, the disposition is likely to become robust. Without such supportive experiences it is likely to weaken or perhaps be extinguished. Though knowledge and skills not acquired early in life might be acquired later, dispositions are probably less amenable to reacquisition once damaged.

Fourth, the processes of selecting curriculum and teaching strategies should include considerations of how desirable dispositions can be strengthened and undesirable dispositions can be weakened. Therefore, when selecting teaching practices, opportunities for children to exhibit desirable dispositions should be considered. For example, if the disposition to accept peers of diverse backgrounds is to be strengthened, then opportunities to engage in that behavior must be available.

Fifth, on the basis of the evidence accumulated from research on mastery versus performance motivation, it seems reasonable to suggest that there is an optimum amount of positive feedback for young children above which children may become preoccupied with their performance and the judgments of others rather than involved in the task, and hence their achievement would be acquired at the expense of their disposition to learn.

Sixth, dispositions are less likely to be acquired through didactic processes than to be modeled by young children as they are around people who exhibit them. If teachers want their young pupils to have robust dispositions to investigate, hypothesize, experiment, and so forth, they might consider making their own such intellectual dispositions more visible to the children. The list of potential ways that teachers could exhibit the intellectual dispositions to be strengthened and supported is very long and deserves serious attention in the course of curriculum planning and teacher education.

Conclusion

Much research is needed to determine which dispositions merit attention. It seems timely to include dispositions among important outcomes of education at every level. By doing so we are likely to pay more deliberate attention to ways in which desirable ones can be strengthened, and undesirable ones can be weakened. For the moment, one of the most important dispositions to be listed in educational goals is the disposition to go on learning. Any educational approach that undermines that disposition is miseducation.

Adapted from *Dispositions: Definitions and Implications for Early Childhood Practices*, by Lilian G. Katz. Urbana, IL:ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. 1993. (Catalog #211; 47pp.; $5).

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EDO-PS-90-3

Guidelines for Family Television Viewing

Children in the U.S. view an average of 3-5 hours of television daily. It is difficult to document effects of such extensive television exposure on children. However, research indicates that television viewing may be linked to violent or aggressive behavior, obesity, poor academic performance, precocious sexuality, and the use of drugs or alcohol. Thus, it is important that parents help their children use television as a positive, creative force, and help them avoid television's negative influences.

Aspects of Viewing

1. *Time spent watching television.* When children spend 3-5 hours a day watching television, time for other activities is severely limited. Childhood is a period of growth and development, when children need to play, alone and with other children. Children need to read and talk with other children and adults.

2. *Violence on television.* The amount of violence on television is increasing. A recent report from the National Institute of Mental Health indicates that television violence can be harmful to young children. Children can become frightened, worried or suspicious from watching violence on TV. Researchers have also found that children who watch many violent programs tend to be more aggressive than other children on the playground and in class. Parents should realize that viewing violent programs may encourage their children's tendency toward aggression. Parents also need to keep in mind that television often portrays sexual behavior and the use of alcohol or drugs in realistic or inviting terms.

3. *TV and learning.* Many recent studies indicate that excessive television viewing may have a detrimental effect on learning and school performance. The hours spent viewing television interfere with homework and limit the time available for other ways of learning. If a child is not performing well academically, television watching may be a strong factor contributing to the problem.

4. *Commercials.* The average child sees more than 20,000 commercials a year. Advertisers spend roughly $700 million annually to make sure that their sales pitches reach large numbers of children. The majority of food advertising is for heavily sugared products such as candy and presweetened cereal. Commercials for meat, milk products, bread, and juice make up only about 4% of the food ads shown during children's viewing time. This emphasis can give children a distorted picture of how they ought to eat. A recent study found a direct relationship between amount of television viewing and children's risk of obesity.

Guidelines for Parents

Here are some ideas that will help parents guide their children's TV viewing:

1. *Set limits.* Know how many hours of television your children watch. Limit your children's viewing to one or two hours per day. Don't be afraid to reduce the amount of television your children watch. Your children probably won't like being kept away from the television set. Television is seductive. The programs your children watch are apt to be filled with commercials promoting other programs. The word-of-mouth campaign that goes on in playgrounds and school cafeterias is powerful and pervasive. But establishing good habits for your children is worth the effort. Television watching is often more habit than choice.

Don't be surprised if your children go through a sort of withdrawal when the television time is reduced. You can ease the transition by encouraging alternative activities such as sports, games, chores, reading, conversation, or hobbies. You can help by joining your children in these activities. Because children model their behavior after their parents' example, an examination of your own television viewing habits may also help. Be a good model yourself.

Eliminate some TV watching by setting a few basic rules, such as no television during meals, or before household tasks or homework are completed.

2. *Plan.* Encourage children to plan their viewing by using a *TV Guide* or newspaper listing rather than flipping the channels to decide what to watch. The set should go on only for specific programs, and it should go off when they are over. Approach a television program as you would a movie. Help children decide which show to see, and talk about the show after it ends. Select programs that feature children in your child's age range. Try to balance action, comedy, fine arts, and sports.

Don't reward or withhold television in order to punish. Such practices make television seem even more important.

3. *Participate*. Know what your children watch on television. Watch with them and talk about the programs. TV programs may help you discuss difficult topics such as sex and war. Follow up interesting programs with library books. Explain situations that are confusing. Ask the child about his or her responses to the program when it is over. Discuss the difference between fantasy and reality. The worst program may be a good experience for your children if you are there to help them get the right message, while the best program may be wasted without your encouragement to think, evaluate, and question.

Parents who watch television with their children will be able to point out that violence on television is not real, and that the actor has not actually been killed or maimed. Parents can also show disapproval of the violent episodes and stress that such behavior is not the best way to resolve a problem. By discussing the violence shown on television, parents can lessen its impact.

The best solution, of course, is for parents to eliminate the most violent programs from their children's schedule. Remember that lock-out devices will ensure that certain channels cannot be seen. If you are offended by certain programs and intend to forbid your children to watch them, try to communicate your reasons. If your children are watching a program, and you see behavior to which you object, tell them so, and explain your objection.

The Center for Early Education and Development's publication *How Can I Guide My Child's TV Viewing?* lists psychologist John Murray's recommendations for actions parents can take to deal with violent programs:

- Watch at least one episode of each program your child watches so you know how violent it is.
- When you are viewing together, discuss the violence with your child. Talk about why the violence happened and how painful it was. Ask your child for ideas about how the conflict could have been resolved without violence.
- Explain to your child how violence on entertainment programs is faked and what might happen if other people casually tried these same stunts.
- Encourage your child to watch programs with characters who cooperate and care for each other. Such programs have been shown to influence children in positive ways.

4. *Resist commercials*. Don't expect your children to resist commercials for candy and snack foods without help from you. The ability to see through a sales pitch is learned fairly late and with difficulty. Poor eating habits can be picked up early and with ease. Advertisers have market researchers, writers, producers, and saturation campaigns with big budgets on their side. When your children request foods and toys advertised on television, teach them that television makes them want things they don't necessarily need and that may even be harmful. Help the child analyze commercials. Note the exaggerated claims, and the fact that the makers of the product pay for advertising.

5. *Express your views*. The most effective way to change commercials or programs is to call your local television station. When you are offended or pleased by something on television, let the station manager know. Write or call the network or the program's sponsor. Stations, networks, and sponsors are all concerned about the effects of television on children and are responsive to parents' concerns. Be specific. Don't call or write just to complain. It is also important to voice your approval. Programs you like may not have high ratings, and your support may help keep them on the air.

If you feel a commercial is inaccurate or misleading, write down the name of the product, the channel, the time you saw the commercial, and a brief description of your concern. Then call your local Better Business Bureau with this information, or send it to the Children's Advertising Review Unit, Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., 845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

6. *Get help*. Action for Children's Television (ACT, 20 University Road, Cambridge, MA 02138) has been a leading public interest group.

This ERIC Digest was adapted from two publications:

How Can I Guide My Child's TV Viewing? from the Center for Early Education and Development of the University of Minnesota, and

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ERIC Digest

EDO-PS-90-2

Parent Education and Support Programs

Douglas R. Powell

Today there are numerous signs that the task of rearing competent children is becoming increasingly difficult. Dramatic changes in the structure and lifestyles of families and growing societal pressure for children to possess specific knowledge and skills at an early age are just two of the new and challenging conditions of parenthood. Conflicting research information sometimes results in conflicting advice for parents. Parents have always routinely sought the advice and help of relatives, friends and professionals. However, traditional sources of help—especially the extended family and neighborhood—are less available today than they were in the past.

Teachers and other human service professionals have long recognized the need to provide parents with child-rearing information and support. The formation of partnerships between parents and teachers that will foster children's development has been a persistent goal of most early childhood programs and elementary schools. In recent years, this goal has taken on increased importance as diverse segments of American society have recognized the need to help parents deal with the multiple pressures of rearing children in today's complex world. This digest describes current programmatic efforts to inform and support parents, and briefly reviews the research evidence on the effectiveness of parent education and support programs.

Approaches to Supporting Parents

The term *parent education* typically evokes the image of an expert lecturing a group of mothers about the ages and stages of child development. Yet a view of parent education and support as a staff-directed, didactic activity is neither a complete nor accurate portrayal of many programs of parent education and support. The concept of the parent education field has broadened considerably in the past two decades. At federal, state, and local levels, there are now a variety of ambitious and diverse initiatives aimed at supporting families with young children.

An important federal effort is the recent Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (Public Law 99-457), which assist states in offering early intervention services for infants and toddlers and their families. The amendments call for a multidisciplinary team, which includes the parent or guardian, to develop an individualized family service plan that includes a statement of the family's strengths and needs in regards to enhancing the child's development. Services are to be aimed at the family system, not the child alone. This law strengthens the commitment to parent involvement set forth in Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975.

Another federal effort, Head Start, has been this country's most extensive investment in the education of young children. Head Start has experimented with innovative strategies for involving families in program activities since its beginnings in 1965 (Zigler and Freedman, 1987).

State governments have been active in developing early childhood programs focused on families. One of the oldest state efforts is Minnesota's Early Childhood and Family Education Program. Founded in 1975, the program operates through local school districts to provide parent discussion groups, home visits, child development classes, and other approaches to enhancing and supporting parental competence. State-level initiatives designed to support families with young children have been established in a number of other states.

Local communities throughout the country have fostered the creation of a rapidly growing number of parent-oriented programs. These efforts, many of which have grassroots origins, range from drop-in center formats to peer self-help group methods. The Family Resource Coalition, based in Chicago, was founded in 1981 by many diverse community-based programs as a national organization for promoting the development of family resource programs.

The Effects of Parent Education and Support

Research on the effects of programs aimed at enhancing parents' child-rearing competence points to some promising patterns. Evaluations of intensive parent- or family-oriented early childhood programs serving low-income populations have found positive short-term effects on child competence and maternal behaviors, and long-term effects on such family characteristics as level of education, family size, and financial self-support (Powell, 1989). Other data suggest that the magnitude of program effects is associated with the number of program contacts with a family (Heinicke, Beckwith and Thompson, 1988) and the range of services offered to the family.

Little is known about effects of programs employing modest approaches to parent education and support, such as periodic lectures. Research on working- and middle-class populations is especially sparse.

Dimensions of a High-Quality Parent Program

The rapid growth of parent education and support programs leads to questions about what constitutes a high-quality program. Four program dimensions are proposed below on the basis of existing research and theory (see Powell, 1989).

1. It can be argued that high-quality programs are characterized by collaborative, equal relations between parents and program staff in which the intent is to empower parents in their child-rearing roles (Powell, 1988). It is increasingly suggested that program staff serve as facilitators of goals and activities jointly determined by parents and program staff, and not as experts who assume they know what is best for parents (Cochran, 1988). Illustrative of this approach is open-ended discussion of parent-initiated topics as opposed to a largely one-way flow of information from staff to parent. Collaborative parent-staff ties provide a means for ensuring that program methods and content are responsive to parents' needs.

2. Research data suggest that parent programs need to maintain a balanced focus on the needs of both parent and child. The content of parent programs has broadened in recent years to include significant attention to the social context of parenthood. This substantive shift reflects an interest in the interconnectedness of child, family, and community, and assumes that providing parents with social support in the form of helpful interpersonal relationships and material assistance (if needed) will enhance parent functioning and, ultimately, child development. Program efforts toward this end include the strengthening of parents' social networks, social support, and community ties as a buffer against stressful life circumstances and transitions. The term *parent support* is a reflection of the shift. While there are strong justifications for the shift, there is the potential problem that parents' needs and interests may overshadow program attention to the child. The literature on programs serving high-risk populations, for instance, points to the tendency for program workers to become heavily involved in crisis intervention regarding family matters (Halpern and Larner, 1988).

3. A recent development in parent education and support has resulted in programs being tailored to be responsive to the needs and characteristics of the population being served. The idea that a particular program model can work with almost any parent has given way to an interest in matching parents to different types of programs. This interest is especially evident in efforts to design programs that are responsive to cultural characteristics and values of ethnic populations, and in programs serving parents living in low-income and high-risk circumstances.

4. In high quality initiatives, a significant amount of program time is devoted to open-ended parent-dominated discussion. Principles of adult education recommend that programs include a strong experiential component. This is critical, because parents are likely to process new information according to existing beliefs about their child and child development. Discussion provides an opportunity for parents to digest new insights in relation to existing ideas.

Conclusion

Programs of parent education and support offer promising strategies for facilitating the education and development of young children. It is crucial for educators and policymakers to find ways to alter classroom practices, early childhood programs, and schools to promote the family's contributions to early education and development.

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Planning for Parent Participation in Schools for Young Children

Mick Coleman

Family and school represent the primary environments in which young children grow and develop. Today, the link between these institutions is taking on added significance as concern mounts over the challenges that preschools face in building or maintaining strong parent participation. In order to effectively meet the needs of all families, parent participation programs need to give equal consideration to the needs of all families represented in the class. Teachers can plan parent participation strategies for their own classroom through use of the following guides.

Plan for Parent Participation

1. A good place to begin is to document the barriers to parent involvement created by such factors as family structures (dual career, single parent, teenage parent) and family work schedules (full-time, job sharing, flex-time). This can be accomplished through parent-teacher conferences, telephone calls, or a short questionnaire.

Documentation of the barriers to parent participation can be used to develop policies that are likely to work with the parent community. For example, more options may be needed as to when parent-teacher conferences are held (before, during, and after school), how they are held (face-to-face, by telephone, by computer, in small groups), or where they are held (at the school, in the home, at a neighborhood center, or at the parent's place of employment).

2. Recommendations for parent participation should take into account the resources and expertise of parents. Care should be taken to offer parents a range of support, partnership, and leadership roles. Parents can participate by preparing classroom materials, serving on a committee to select classroom equipment and materials, or becoming a member of a search committee to select personnel. Participation can even extend to parents' leading classroom activities in which they have expertise.

3. Teachers can include topics that relate to both classroom and family environments when they develop informational newsletters, public relations material, and parent meetings. Family strengths, parent-child communication, childhood stress, and in-home safety all have the potential to affect children's classroom behavior. Of equal importance is the effect of these topics on family well-being. Schools can meet their objectives and serve the interests and needs of families by offering information and educational programs that give parents practical suggestions on topics like these and others.

4. Plan ahead for parent-teacher conferences. Communicate to parents at the beginning of the year about school policies and services. Inform parents about classroom goals for the year, and give a few examples of what children will be learning. Also let parents know about the frequency and nature of parent-teacher conferences. Once conferences are set, keep a calendar of when, how, and where family contacts are to be made.

5. For some parents, education today is quite different from what they experienced two or three decades ago. Fear of the unknown may be one reason that parents avoid contact with their child's school. For other parents, school may be intimidating because it reminds them of an unpleasant school experience. Empower parents with confidence by supplying them with a list of questions they can ask teachers throughout the school year.

6. Create a comfortable conference environment in which parents feel free to share information, ask questions, and make recommendations. Allowing parents to begin the conference by asking their own questions and expressing their own concerns is one way to convey respect for their input. Here are some other ways to share responsibility with parents during the conference:

- Schedule an adequate amount of time for the conference so that the parent does not feel rushed.
- If the conference is held at the school, point out to the parent the projects that involved his or her child.
- Begin and end the conference by noting something positive about the child.
- Ask open-ended questions ("How do you help your child with her shyness?") instead of "yes" or "no" questions ("Do you help your child with her shyness?").

- Communicate in a way that matches, yet shows respect for, the parent's background. Be careful not to make assumptions about a parent's level of knowledge or understanding, and avoid talking down to parents.
- Send nonverbal messages of respect and interest. Sit facing the parent and maintain good eye-contact. Put aside paperwork and postpone taking notes until after the conference has ended.
- Instead of offering advice, ask the parent to share feelings and suggestions for addressing an issue. Then offer your own input as a basis for negotiation.

7. Limit the number of educational objectives set during the parent-teacher conference to those that can reasonably be addressed in a specified time. Break each objective down into simple steps. Assign parents and teachers responsibilities for meeting each objective in the class and home. Plan a strategy for evaluating the objectives from both the parents' and teacher's perspective.

8. Follow up the parent-teacher conference with a brief note thanking the parents for their participation. This is also a good opportunity to summarize major points discussed during the conference.

Plan for Multicultural Parent Participation

1. Seek advice and assistance from parents in introducing young children to various cultures through the use of stories, holidays, art exhibits, fairs, plays, and other events. Always include in any discussion of cultural differences the ways in which such values as honesty, fairness, loyalty, and industry are shared by all cultures.

2. Avoid making sweeping generalizations about children from different family backgrounds. For example, it has been suggested that a highly structured and verbal-based curriculum is at odds with the nonverbal, people-oriented, and individualistic values found in the cultural background of Black children (Hale-Benson, 1982). Modeling and imitation has been suggested as a big part of the learning process for Hispanic children (Hadley, 1987). In contrast, it has been suggested that a structured curriculum would perhaps be most appropriate for Vietnamese children who are taught to value obedience and dependence (Bowman & Brady, 1982). It is unlikely that the authors of these studies meant for their suggestions to hold for all children from Black, Hispanic, or Vietnamese families. Balance general cultural differences with an assessment of the individual child, and of the child's family and neighborhood environments. Otherwise, sweeping generalizations about children may be based on superficial group characteristics (for example, color of skin or language spoken) rather than on individual strengths and needs.

3. Periodically review social networks among children. Do certain children segregate themselves through their choice of toys, activities, or play? This issue is an important one, because, as Karnes and her colleagues (1983) found, children from low-income families who are placed in middle-class preschool programs can still be segregated from their peers during classroom activities. Teachers can help all children share classroom experiences by encouraging those children with similar interests to play together or work together on a special project. Children's assignments to small group activities can be periodically rotated to ensure that the children have many opportunities to learn about and from all their classroom peers.

Conclusion

As American families continue to change, programs for young children will need to adopt parent participation programs that reinforce a consistency of early growth and development experiences between children's family and classroom environments. Strong linkages between the school and the home can be ensured when teachers are routinely allowed the time and resources to discuss the impact on school-home relations of the diversity of family structures, backgrounds, and lifestyles found in their classrooms; and develop a range of strategies by which they can involve all families of the young children they teach.

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The Role of Parents in the Development of Peer Group Competence

Shirley G. Moore

As a child leaves infancy and approaches toddlerhood, one of the tasks parents face is introducing the child to the peer group. To be sure, parents are interested in their child's earliest interactions with peers, but in time, parents become more seriously invested in their children's ability to get along with playmates. *Getting along* has different meanings for different parents, but in general, parents want their child to enjoy the company of other children, be liked by them, be well-behaved in their presence (for example, share and cooperate with them), and resist the influence of companions who are overly boisterous, aggressive or defiant of adult authority.

How do parents help their child become a socially competent, well-liked playmate who is not too easily influenced by ill-behaved peers? What do we know from research literature in this area? Inasmuch as peer relations is only one of many social relationships that a child must master, it is not surprising that research on parenting styles gives some helpful insights into development of social skills in the peer group. A number of investigators, such as Diana Baumrind, Martin Hoffman, and Martha Putallaz, have made significant contributions to this topic.

The research of Diana Baumrind is particularly noteworthy. Baumrind has published a series of studies on the relation between parental child rearing styles and social competence in children of preschool and school age. Data on nursery school children were obtained from observations in a school setting and in laboratory test situations when the children were approximately four to five years of age. Data on the children's parents were obtained through home observations and interviews of both mothers and fathers. Three contrasting parenting styles were identified by Baumrind: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative, each of which has implications for the child's social competence with peers and adults. The three parenting styles differ particularly on two parenting dimensions: the amount of nurturance in child-rearing interactions and the amount of parental control over the child's activities and behavior.

Authoritarian parents tend to be low in nurturance and high in parental control compared with other parents. They set absolute standards of behavior for their children that are not to be questioned or negotiated. They favor forceful discipline and demand prompt obedience. Authoritarian parents also are less likely than others to use more gentle methods of persuasion, such as affection, praise and rewards, with their children. Consequently, authoritarian parents are prone to model the more aggressive modes of conflict resolution and are lax in modeling affectionate, nurturant behaviors in their interactions with their children.

In sharp contrast, permissive parents tend to be moderate-to-high in nurturance, but low in parental control. These parents place relatively few demands on their children and are likely to be inconsistent disciplinarians. They are accepting of the child's impulses, desires, and actions and are less likely than other parents to monitor their children's behavior. Although their children tend to be friendly, sociable youngsters, compared with others their age they lack a knowledge of appropriate behaviors for ordinary social situations and take too little responsibility for their own misbehavior.

Authoritative parents, in contrast to both authoritarian and permissive parents, tend to be high in nurturance and moderate in parental control when it comes to dealing with child behavior. It is this combination of parenting strategies that Baumrind and others find the most facilitative in the development of social competence during early childhood and beyond. The following discussion describes specific behaviors used by authoritative parents and the role these behaviors play in fostering social development.

The Case for High Nurturance

Nurturing behaviors of parents that predict social competence include affectionate and friendly interaction with the child; consideration for the child's feelings, desires and needs; interest in the child's daily activities; respect for the child's points of view; expression of parental pride in the child's accomplishments; and support and encouragement during times of stress in the child's life.

The advantages of high levels of nurturance in fostering social development have been confirmed again and again in studies of children. These advantages begin in infancy, when maternal nurturance facilitates a secure attachment which, in turn, predicts social competence, and continue throughout childhood. High levels of nurturance in child rearing virtually assure more positive adult-child interactions than negative ones in the day-to-day operations of family life. This, in turn, predisposes the child to return love to the parent and to enjoy spending time with the parent, thus increasing the possibilities of significant parental influence throughout childhood. Parental nurturance also motivates the child to please the parent by striving to live up to parental expectations and helps to keep the child from hurting or disappointing the loved parent. Because children more readily identify with nurturant than nonnurturant models, the children of nurturing parents are more likely to incorporate parental values, such as considerateness and fairness in interpersonal relations, into their own lifestyle. One would also expect these children to resist peer group values that are clearly different from family values.

If there is a downside to high levels of nurturance in child rearing, it is the risk that nurturant parents might be more lax than other parents in challenging their children to measure up to developmentally appropriate standards for behavior. This risk would appear to be reduced, however, by the authoritative parents' inclination to combine moderate levels of parental control with nurturance.

The Case of Moderate Control

Nurturant parents who maintain at least a moderate level of control over their child do not give up their right to set behavioral standards for the child and to convey the importance of compliance with those standards. To facilitate compliance, and as a courtesy to the child, authoritative parents offer reasons and explanations for the demands placed on their children. Evidence suggests that such a practice increases the child's understanding of rules and regulations, eventually making it possible for the child to monitor his or her behavior in the absence of the parent.

Parents who use authoritative child rearing practices often use positive reinforcers, such as praise, approval, and rewards, to increase the child's compliance with behavioral standards. The success of positive social reinforcement in producing desirable behavior is legendary. A parent's positive response to good behavior may be the most powerful tool the parent has for increasing child compliance and decreasing the need for disciplinary action.

When misbehavior does occur and discipline is deemed necessary, authoritative parents show a preference for "rational-inductive discipline," in which both sides of an issue are stated and a just solution is sought. These parents also prefer "consequence-oriented discipline" in which children are expected to make up for their wrongdoing. Martin Hoffman points out that this disciplinary strategy has the advantage of focusing the child's attention on the plight of the victim rather than on the child's plight at the hands of an angry parent.

Finally, authoritative parents try to avoid the more extreme forms of punishment in rearing their children. They do not favor harsh physical punishment or put-downs, such as ridicule or negative social comparison, which attack the child's sense of personal worth. Although the harsher forms of punishment can be effective in the short run, they often generate resentment and hostility that carry over to the school and peer group, reducing the child's effectiveness in these settings.

Summary

In parenting, as in other endeavors, nothing works all of the time. It is safe to say, however, that authoritative parenting works better than most other parenting styles in facilitating the development of social competence in children at home and in the peer group. High levels of nurturance combined with moderate levels of control help adults be responsible child rearing agents for their children and help children become mature, competent members of society. With a little bit of luck, the children of authoritative parents should enjoy more than their share of success in the peer group.

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Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice

Lilian G. Katz

Helping children to "feel good about themselves" is frequently listed as an important goal of early education. For example, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1990) listed the development of "a positive self-image" first among the characteristics of a good quality early childhood program. One newsletter for teachers quotes a statement that "the basis for *everything* we do is self-esteem. Therefore, if we can do something to give children a stronger sense of themselves, starting in preschool, they'll be [a lot wiser] in the choices they make" (McDaniel, 1986).

Early Childhood Practices: Narcissism versus Self Esteem

While the development of high self-esteem seems a worthwhile goal, many practices designed to reach it may instead be encouraging narcissism. This confusion is exemplified by a practice observed in a first grade classroom. Each child had produced a booklet titled "All About Me," consisting of dittoed pages prepared by the teacher, on which the child had provided information. The first page asked for a list of basic information about the child's home and family. The second page was titled "What I like to eat," the third "What I like to watch on TV," the next "What I want for a present," and so forth. On each page the child's attention was directed toward his or her own inner gratification. The topic of each page in these booklets put the child in the role of consumer. No page was included that put the child in the role of producer, explorer, or problem solver.

Another common example of practices intended to enhance self-esteem but unlikely to do so was a display of kindergartners' work consisting of nine paper doll-like figures, each with a balloon containing a sentence stem beginning "I am special because..." The sentences depicted in the display read "I am special because I can color," "...I can ride a bike," and so forth. Although these skills are valuable, is there not some risk in encouraging children to believe that their specialness is dependent on these comparatively trivial things, rather than on more enduring dispositions such as persistence in the face of difficulty and readiness to help their classmates?

Teachers often employ practices intended to motivate children by beginning "where they are." However, the same intentions could be satisfied in other ways. Starting "where children are" can be accomplished by providing topics that would encourage curiosity about others *and* themselves, reduce emphasis on consumerism, and at the same time strengthen the intellectual ethos of the classroom.

Such a project was observed in a rural British infant school. A large display on the bulletin board was titled "We Are a Class Full of Bodies." Just below the title was the heading "Here Are the Details." The display space was taken up with bar graphs of the children's weights and heights, eye colors, shoe sizes, and so forth. As the children worked in small groups collecting information brought from home, taking measurements, and preparing graphs together, the teacher was able to create an ethos of a community of researchers. This project began "where the children were" by collecting, pooling, analyzing, and displaying data derived from all the children in the class.

Self-Esteem: Developmental and Cross-Cultural Considerations

In an examination of developmental considerations, Bednar, Wells, and Peterson (1989) suggest that feelings of competence and the self-esteem associated with them are enhanced in children when their parents provide an optimum mixture of acceptance, affection, limits, and expectations. In a similar way, teachers are likely to engender positive feelings when they provide such a combination of acceptance, limits, and expectations concerning behavior and effort (Lamborn et al., 1991).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) point out that the concept of the self varies among cultures, and that Westerners typically construe themselves as *independent*, stable entities. On the other hand, they assert that in Asia and Africa the self is viewed as *interdependent* and connected with the social context. Westerners view the self as an autonomous entity consisting of a unique configuration of traits. The Asian view is that the self exists primarily in relation to specific social contexts, and is esteemed to the extent that it can adjust to others and maintain harmony.

Appropriate Practices

The trend toward excessive emphasis on self-esteem and self-congratulation described above may be due to a general desire to correct earlier traditions of avoiding complimenting children for fear of making them conceited. However, the current practices described above may be overcorrections of such traditions.

Self-esteem is most likely to be fostered when children are esteemed and treated respectfully and receive the right kind of positive, meaningful feedback in the form of appreciation, rather than empty praise and flattery. Appreciation is positive feedback related explicitly and directly to the *content* of the child's interest and effort. A teacher might, for example, bring a new reference book to class in response to a question raised by a child. In this way, the teacher provides positive feedback without taking the children's minds off the subject. Self-esteem can be based on increased understanding and competence, as well as on contributing to the work of the group.

Healthy self-esteem is more likely to be developed when children are engaged in activities for which they can make real decisions and contributions than in activities that are frivolous and cute. Early childhood educators have traditionally emphasized the fact that play is children's natural way of learning (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 1988). Besides play, however, it is just as natural for young children to learn through investigation. Young children are born scientists. They devote enormous amounts of time and energy to investigating the environments in which they are raised.

Teachers can capitalize on these in-born dispositions by engaging children in investigations through project work, investigations that are in-depth studies of real topics, environments, events, and objects worthy of children's attention and understanding (Katz & Chard, 1989). In the course of such undertakings, children negotiate with their teachers to determine the questions to be answered, the studies to be undertaken, and ways of representing their findings in media such as painting, drawing, and dramatic play. Project work provides children with opportunity for discussion, decision making, cooperation, initiative, negotiation, compromise, and evaluation of the outcomes of their own efforts. In this way, children's self-esteem can be based on their contribution to the work of the group.

Children's self-esteem can also be strengthened when they have the opportunity to develop and apply criteria for evaluating their own work. For example, instead of taking work home daily, they can be encouraged to collect it for a week or more, after which the teacher can discuss possible criteria for selecting an item they wish to take home. The emphasis should not be on whether they like a piece of work, but on whether the piece includes all they want it to, or whether it is as clear or informative as they want it to be. Similarly, when children are engaged in project work with others, they can evaluate the extent to which they have answered the questions they began with, and assess the work accomplished on criteria developed with their teacher concerning the accuracy, completeness, and interest value of their final products (Katz & Chard, 1989).

Conclusion

Practices which engage children's minds in investigating aspects of their own experiences and environments can help them develop realistic criteria of self-esteem. Such practices are more likely than trivial practices which engender self-preoccupation to build in children a deep sense of competence and self-worth that can provide a firm foundation for their future.

Editor's Note: This Digest is excerpted from the paper *Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice* (available from ERIC/EECE; approximately 80 pages; $10.00).

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ERIC Digest

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Teacher-Parent Partnerships

Kevin J. Swick

The partnership construct is based on the premise that collaborating partners have some common basis for action and a sense of mutuality that supports their joint ventures. Teachers and parents have a common need for joining together in partnership: the need to foster positive growth in children and in themselves. It is their challenge to create a sense of mutuality so that their efforts are meaningful to all those involved.

Parent and Teacher Attributes That Promote Partnership

Research provides insight on parent attributes that support meaningful partnerships. These attributes include warmth, sensitivity, nurturance, the ability to listen, consistency, a positive self-image, a sense of efficacy, personal competence, and effective interpersonal skills.

Marital happiness, family harmony, success in prior collaborations, and openness to others' ideas have also been related to parental competence in promoting partnerships (Swick, 1991). Schaefer (1985) has noted that parents who are high in self-esteem are more assertive in their family and school involvement. Not all parents achieve the competence that supports these attributes. Teachers can provide a setting that encourages the development of partnership behaviors in parents. Modeling respect and communication skills, showing a genuine interest in the children, responding constructively to parent concerns, promoting a teamwork philosophy, and being sensitive to parent and family needs are some ways to promote this process. Lawler (1991) suggests that teachers encourage parents to be positive through the example they set in being supportive, responsive, and dependable.

Teacher attributes that appear to positively influence teachers' relationships with children and parents include: warmth, openness, sensitivity, flexibility, reliability, and accessibility (Comer and Haynes, 1991). From the parents' perspective, these teacher characteristics are desirable: trust, warmth, closeness, positive self-image, effective classroom management, child-centeredness, positive discipline, nurturance, and effective teaching skills. Researchers have cited the following teacher attributes as highly related to successful parent involvement: positive attitudes, active planning to involve parents, continuous teacher training, involvement in professional growth, and personal competence (Epstein, 1984; Galinsky, 1990).

Teacher-Parent Partnership Roles: A Framework

The research on parent involvement indicates that parents and teachers can create viable partnerships by engaging in joint learning activities, supporting each other in their respective roles, carrying out classroom and school improvement activities, conducting collaborative curriculum projects in the classroom, participating together in various decision-making activities, and being advocates for children (Swick, 1991). Integral to these activities are the various parent and teacher roles and behaviors that make for successful partnerships.

Parenting roles are performed within the family and within family-school relationships. Roles critical to family growth are nurturing, teaching, and modeling. Within the larger family-school structure, parents must carry out learning, doing, supporting, and decision-making roles. Naturally, parents use these various roles across contexts, but they emphasize particular roles as family or family-school situations dictate (Schaefer, 1985). For example, recent findings suggest that when parents sense an inviting school climate, they emphasize nurturing and supporting behaviors in their interactions with teachers; their participation in the school environment also increases (Comer and Haynes, 1991).

Teacher roles critical to the partnership process include the family-centered roles of support, education, and guidance. Teacher roles that focus on family involvement in school and classroom activities include those of nurturing, supporting, guiding, and decision-making.

Together, *parents and teachers* can foster their partnership through such behaviors as collaborating, planning, communicating and evaluating (Epstein and Dauber, 1991; Swick, 1991).

A Framework and Strategies: Applications from Research

An action-oriented philosophy of family-school support and nurturance is a powerful force in creating a positive learning environment. Teacher actions that promote such a philosophy include the sensitive involvement of parents from cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds (Lightfoot, 1978). Relating classroom activities to the varying needs and interests of children and families is another reflection of a family-centered program.

Since teacher-parent partnerships are developmental in nature and best realized through a comprehensive approach, a framework for carrying out the process is essential. The following elements need close scrutiny: teacher and parent contexts, role understandings, and an appreciation of the partnership process itself. Further, a sensitivity to each others' needs, situations, and talents is a requisite basis for a viable program.

Given that each program is and should be unique, particular elements, such as the following, are essential: needs assessments, goal statements, prioritization of activities, strategy development, implementation plans, and evaluation tools (Comer and Haynes, 1991). It has been noted that parents, when given the opportunity, are quite active in setting program goals (Powell, 1989). Swick (1992) notes that the availability of teachers and the offering of such services as transportation and child care to parents increases participation in program planning significantly.

A plethora of strategies have proven effective in promoting strong partnerships. The degree to which strategies are related to the needs and interests of parents and to the unique situations of schools and teachers influences the level of success. Home visits, conferences, parent centers, telecommunication, involvement in the classroom, participatory decision-making, parent and adult education programs, home learning activities, and family-school networking are some of the many strategies that have effectively engaged parents and teachers in supportive and collaborative roles (Swick, 1991). Creative uses of technology offer new possibilities for building partnerships with parents that reach beyond traditional limits (Bauch, 1990).

Family-Centered Schools

Early childhood education's commitment to families is strengthened through the partnership process. True collaborative efforts are prompting teachers and parents to plan from a family-centered perspective. Family-centered schools need to be intimately involved with families in planning and nurturing healthy environments. A significant part of this effort is the development of a curriculum for caring that promotes a shared learning process among children, parents, and teachers. This school-family curriculum should focus on the caring elements of self-image, prosocial relationships with others, development of multicultural understandings, sensitive and empathetic relationships, nurturing and positive discipline, and creative problem-solving strategies.

A family-centered focus must also become a part of the community's fabric. A human network of family, school, and community learners needs to be part of a covenant for creating positive human environments. In particular, intergenerational family wellness needs, the family's and the school's needs for learning and sharing, and related community partnership needs provide the foundation for a family-centered effort.

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Violence and Young Children's Development

Lorraine B. Wallach

Violence in the United States has claimed thousands of lives and annually costs hundreds of millions of dollars in medical care and lost wages. In the context of this digest, the term *violence* is used to refer to child abuse or other domestic conflict, gang aggression, and community crime, including assault. One of the most pernicious consequences of violence is its effect on the development of children. This digest examines the developmental consequences for children who are the victims of, or witnesses to, family and community violence.

Violence in the Preschool Years

Children growing up with violence are at risk for pathological development. According to Erikson's classical exposition of individual development, learning to trust is the infant's primary task during the first year of life. Trust provides the foundation for further development and forms the basis for self-confidence and self-esteem. The baby's ability to trust is dependent upon the family's ability to provide consistent care and to respond to the infant's need for love and stimulation. Caregiving is compromised when the infant's family lives in a community racked by violence and when the family fears for its safety. Parents may not give an infant proper care when their psychological energy is sapped by efforts to keep safe (Halpern, 1990). Routine tasks like going to work, shopping, and keeping clinic appointments take careful planning and extra effort.

When infants reach toddlerhood they have an inner push to try newly gained skills, such as walking, jumping, and climbing. These skills are best practiced in parks and playgrounds, not in crowded apartments. But young children who live in communities racked by crime and menaced by gangs are often not permitted to be out-of-doors. Instead, they are confined to small quarters that hamper their activities, and that lead to restrictions imposed by parents and older family members (Scheinfeld, 1983). These restrictions, which are difficult for toddlers to understand and to obey, can lead in turn to disruptions in their relationships with the rest of the family.

During the preschool years, young children are ready to venture outside of the family in order to make new relationships and learn about other people (Spock, 1988). However, when they live in neighborhoods where dangers lurk outside, children may be prevented from going out to play or even from accompanying older children on errands. In addition, preschoolers may be in child care programs that are located in areas where violent acts occur frequently.

Violence: The School Years

Although the early years are critical in setting the stage for future development, the experiences of the school years are also important to children's healthy growth. During the school years, children develop the social and academic skills necessary to function as adults and citizens; violence at home or in the community takes a high toll.

- When children's energies are drained because they are defending themselves against outside dangers or warding off their own fears, they have difficulty learning in school (Craig, 1992). Children traumatized by violence can have distorted memories, and their cognitive functions can be compromised (Terr, 1983).
- Children who have been victimized by or who have seen others victimized by violence may have trouble learning to get along with others. The anger that is often instilled in such children is likely to be incorporated into their personality structures. Carrying an extra load of anger makes it difficult for them to control their behavior and increases their risk for resorting to violent action.
- Children learn social skills by identifying with adults in their lives. Children cannot learn nonaggressive ways of interacting with others when their only models, including those in the media, use physical force to solve problems (Garbarino et al., 1992).
- To control their fears, children who live with violence may repress feelings. This defensive maneuver takes its toll in their immediate lives and can lead to further pathological development. It can interfere with their ability to relate to others in meaningful ways and to feel empathy. Individuals who cannot empathize with others' feelings are less likely to curb their own aggression, and more likely to become insensitive to brutality in general. Knowing how some youths become emotionally bankrupt in this way helps us understand why they are so careless with their own lives and with the lives of others (Gilligan, 1991).
- Children who are traumatized by violence may have difficulty seeing themselves in future roles that are

meaningful. The California school children who were kidnapped and held hostage in their bus were found to have limited views of their future lives and often anticipated disaster (Terr, 1983). Children who cannot see a decent future for themselves have a hard time concentrating on present tasks such as learning in school and becoming socialized.

- Children need to feel that they can direct some part of their existence, but children who live with violence learn that they have little say in what happens to them. Beginning with the restrictions on autonomy when they are toddlers, this sense of helplessness continues as they reach school age. Not only do they encounter the constraints that all children do, but their freedom is restricted by an environment in which gangs and drug dealers control the streets.
- When children experience a trauma, a common reaction is to regress to an earlier stage when things were easier. This regression can be therapeutic by allowing the child to postpone having to face the feelings aroused by the traumatic event. It is a way of gaining psychological strength. However, when children face continual stress they are in danger of remaining psychologically in an earlier stage of development.

Individual Differences and Resilience

Not all children respond to difficult situations in the same way; there are many factors that influence coping abilities, including age, family reaction to stress, and temperament. Younger children are more likely to succumb to stress than school-age children or adolescents. Infants can be shielded from outside forces if their caregivers are psychologically strong and available to the baby.

Children who live in stable, supportive homes have a better chance of coping because they are surrounded by nurturing adults. If grown-ups are willing to listen to children's fears and provide appropriate outlets for them, children are better able to contend with the difficulties in their lives. Children are more resilient if they are born with easy temperaments and are in good mental health. If they are lucky enough to have strong parents who can withstand the stresses of poverty and community violence, children also have a better chance of growing into happy and productive adults (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983).

Adaptability in Children

Although what happens to them in the early years is very important, many children can overcome the hurts and fears of earlier times. For children living in an atmosphere of stress and violence, the ability to make relationships and get from others what they miss in their own families and communities is crucial to healthy development.

The staff in schools, day care centers, and recreational programs can be resources to children and offer them alternative perceptions of themselves, as well as teaching them skills for getting along in the world. With time, effort, and skill, caregivers can provide children with an opportunity to challenge the odds and turn their lives in a positive direction.

NOTE: This digest is the first in a series of two digests on violence in children's lives.

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ERIC Digest

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Working with Working Families

Margaret King

Well over half the women with children younger than 6 are in the labor force. This percentage has greatly affected the number of children who are cared for outside the home by someone other than a parent and the way in which caregivers and parents must interact. Research on parent involvement suggests that parents should take active roles in their children's lives while the children are enrolled in child care facilities and that parent involvement enhances children's development.

In the past, it was easier for parents (usually mothers) to volunteer for activities in preschools or attend meetings. But with many more women in the work force and heading single-parent families, it is becoming difficult for many parents to participate actively in child care programs. As a result, some parents may see parent involvement in child care programs as an additional pressure. To build positive relationships with parents, caregivers need to gain a better understanding of the needs, concerns, and feelings of employed parents.

Understanding Parents

Employed parents have different needs than parents who are not working. Several factors—including competition, guilt, and time—may affect the relationship between an employed parent and a caregiver. The parents may feel they are competing with the caregiver for the child's affection, since both parent and caregiver have formed protective attachments to the child. For example, the mother of one 10-month-old was concerned that the child might take her first steps in the presence of the child care worker instead of the mother. Likewise, a father became concerned at the end of the day when he asked his child to get ready to go home, and the child protested by saying, "I don't want to go home." In reality, the child was just showing frustration at being separated from dad all day. Situations like these can strain the relationships between parents and child care workers.

Guilt is another feeling that employed parents experience. They may feel that they are abandoning their children by leaving them while they work. Children often contribute to their parents' guilty feelings by expressing their dislike of the parents' leaving. Children sometimes show anger by crying and yelling at their parents when it is time to separate. Children may say, "I don't want you to go to work," "Why do you have to go to work?" or "I don't like my school." It is often hard for parents to explain to their preschool children why they are working and why they must leave them. On the other hand, parents sometimes feel even more guilty when their children do not protest.

Time is also a critical factor. Employed parents may feel that they have many roles and duties to perform but not enough time to perform them. Consequently, they often feel overwhelmed. Employed parents place their children in child care facilities because they are not available to care for the children themselves. Parents who work 40 or more hours a week may feel that they do not have time to volunteer in the center or come in to observe for an hour. The lack of time may intensify the parents' feelings of guilt and competition.

Involving Employed Parents

The child care center and family day home must use a variety of methods to encourage parents to participate. Employed parents need many options to choose from if they are to become active participants in the child care setting.

Remember, not all parents will take advantage of every opportunity. However, child care programs must continue to support families and the ties between parents and children by allowing the parents to make decisions about how much involvement and which experiences and activities meet their needs. A child care service can support the relationship between parent and child through flexible scheduling, parent visits, parent education, formal and informal communication, and informal gatherings.

Flexible scheduling. Many child care centers and preschools have a specific time when all children must be present. Parents need the flexibility to bring children when they choose. Field trips and lunch are exceptions to this principle. However, if a parent can inform the staff of the child's arrival time, plans can be adjusted accordingly.

Flexibility may allow a parent to spend a morning with the child if the parent doesn't have to be at work until noon on a certain day. For example, Jessica's dad doesn't have to be at work until 10:30 a.m. on Wednesdays because he works late on Tuesdays. So Jessica and her dad do something special, such as jogging in the park. Flexibility also makes it easier if parents are divorced and the child stays overnight with the noncustodial parent. Sometimes an extra hour in the morning gives the parent an opportunity to spend additional time with the child. The extra time with a parent may be more important than the fingerpaint activity planned by the caregiver.

This type of flexibility does not mean that parents can have a drop-in arrangement every day. Routines are important to a child's sense of security and well-being. It also does not mean that parents are given reduced rates. Instead, parents and caregivers can work together to decide how to give parents the flexibility they may need.

Parent visits. Parents should have open access to a facility, and visit whenever they wish. One option is to invite parents as special guests who demonstrate their talents. Parents can also be encouraged to visit as a way of spending time with their children. Parents can come by at noon and take their children out to lunch. In infant and toddler programs, parents often come to the child care facility to feed their babies during the lunch hour. For older preschoolers, lunch can be a special treat, as long as they understand that they won't leave when their parents leave. Sometimes parents may have other hours in the day that they would like to spend with their children. A father who finishes a business errand sooner than expected may want to sit in the room and read a story to his child or help the child complete a puzzle.

Parent education. Child care centers and family day homes can offer parents information on topics such as family time management, child development, nutrition, safety, and parent-child communication. Employed parents may not want to come back to a night meeting after they pick up their children in the evening. Facilities can plan programs for various times. Brown bag lunches may be best for some parents, while after-work potlucks or dinner meetings with child care providers may be better for others. Some may prefer early breakfast meetings. Whatever arrangements are made, child care facilities can continue to make information available through newsletters, parent bulletin boards, and communication at arrival and departure times.

Informal communication. Daily communication between parents and caregivers is essential. Caregivers need to talk with parents as they arrive and depart. Information about a child's time away from the center and behavior in the center can be exchanged. In sharing information, the caregiver and parent can begin to develop an understanding of each other's goals for the child.

One excellent method, especially with infants and toddlers, is for caregivers to send home a daily information sheet so that parents have some information about what the child did during the day. Parents are interested in what their children are like when they are not with them. On a half sheet of paper, write the child's name, eating pattern, toileting behavior, playmates, and comments about activities in which the child has participated. The daily information sheets should not replace personal contact with parents at the end of the day. Caregivers should make sure they have at least one positive statement about each child that they can share with the parent at the end of the day.

Formal communication. Home visits are another important, but rarely used, communication tool. Caregivers should try to visit children's homes at least once a year. A parent is often able to talk more easily when the caregiver is on the parent's turf. Caregivers can learn about the parent's child rearing practices.

Parent-teacher conferences are still a must in centers and homes. These conferences provide an opportunity for parents and caregivers to interact. Since a conference provides a sharing of information, the caregiver must be prepared to receive and to give information.

Informal gatherings. Planning opportunities for parents, staff, and children to interact informally is also important. Examples include a Saturday carnival in the spring or fall, an afternoon at the pool, a potluck supper, or an afternoon at the skating rink. As parents become acquainted, they can turn to each other for support.

Understanding and responding to the needs of working parents is necessary to maintaining healthy communication between parents and caregivers. A positive relationship between parents and the child care staff will bring rich rewards in the child's development.

The article was adapted from "Working with Working Families," *Texas Child Care Quarterly* (Fall 1989): 3-8.

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ERIC Digest

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Young Children's Social Development: A Checklist

Diane E. McClellan and Lilian G. Katz

Early childhood educators have traditionally given high priority to enhancing young children's social development. During the last two decades a convincing body of evidence has accumulated to indicate that unless children achieve minimal social competence by about the age of six years, they have a high probability of being at risk throughout life. Hartup suggests that peer relationships contribute a great deal to both social and cognitive development and to the effectiveness with which we function as adults (1992). He states that:

> Indeed, the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is *not* IQ, *not* school grades, and *not* classroom behavior but, rather the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children. Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with other children, and who cannot establish a place for themselves in the peer culture are seriously "at risk" (Hartup, 1991).

The risks are many: poor mental health, dropping out of school, low achievement and other school difficulties, poor employment history, and so forth (see Katz and McClellan, 1991). Given the life-long consequences, relationships should be counted as the first of the four R's of education.

Because social development begins in the early years, it is appropriate that all early childhood programs include regular periodic formal and informal assessment of children's progress in the acquisition of social competence. The set of items presented below is based largely on research identifying elements of social competence in young children, and on studies in which the behavior of well-liked children has been compared to that of less well-liked children (Katz and McClellan, 1991).

The Social Attributes Checklist

The checklist provided in this digest includes attributes of a child's social behavior and preschool experience which teachers should examine every three or four months. Consultations with parents and other caregivers help make the attributes and assessments realistic and reliable.

In using the checklist, teachers should pay attention to whether the attributes are typical. This requires sampling the child's functioning over a period of about three or four weeks. Any child can have one or two really bad days, for a variety of reasons; if assessments are to be reasonably reliable, judgments of the overall pattern of functioning over a period of about a month is required.

Healthy social development does not require that a child be a "social butterfly." The quality rather than quantity of a child's friendships is the important index to note. Keep in mind also that there is evidence that some children are simply shyer than others, and it may be counter-productive to push such children into social relations which make them uncomfortable (Katz and McClellan, 1991). Furthermore, unless that shyness is severe enough to prevent a child from enjoying most of the "good things of life," like birthday parties, picnics, and family outings, it is reasonable to assume that, when handled sensitively, the shyness will be spontaneously outgrown.

Many of the attributes listed in the checklist in this digest indicate adequate social growth if they *usually* characterize the child. This qualifier is included to ensure that occasional fluctuations do not lead to over-interpretation of children's temporary difficulties. On the basis of frequent direct contact with the child, observation in a variety of situations, and information obtained from parents and other caregivers, a teacher or caregiver can assess each child according to the checklist.

Teachers can observe and monitor interactions among the children and let children who rarely have difficulties attempt to solve conflicts by themselves before intervening. If a child appears to be doing well on most of the attributes and characteristics in the checklist, then it is reasonable to assume that occasional social difficulties will be outgrown without intervention.

However, if a child seems to be doing poorly on many of the items on the list, the adults responsible for his or her care can implement strategies that will help the child to overcome and outgrow social difficulties. We suggest that this checklist be used as a guide among teachers and

The Social Attributes Checklist

I. Individual Attributes

The child:

1. Is **usually** in a positive mood
2. Is not **excessively** dependent on the teacher, assistant or other adults
3. **Usually** comes to the program or setting willingly
4. **Usually** copes with rebuffs and reverses adequately
5. Shows the capacity to empathize
6. Has positive relationship with one or two peers; shows capacity to really care about them, miss them if absent, etc.
7. Displays the capacity for humor
8. Does not seem to be acutely or chronically lonely

II. Social Skill Attributes

The child **usually**:

1. Approaches others positively
2. Expresses wishes and preferences clearly; gives reasons for actions and positions
3. Asserts own rights and needs appropriately
4. Is not easily intimidated by bullies
5. Expresses frustrations and anger effectively and without harming others or property
6. Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
7. Enters ongoing discussion on the subject; makes relevant contributions to ongoing activities
8. Takes turns fairly easily
9. Shows interest in others; exchanges information with and requests information from others appropriately
10. Negotiates and compromises with others appropriately
11. Does not draw inappropriate attention to self
12. Accepts and enjoys peers and adults of ethnic groups other than his or her own.
13. Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
14. Interacts non-verbally with other children with smiles, waves, nods, etc.

III. Peer Relationship Attributes

The child is:

1. **Usually** accepted versus neglected or rejected by other children
2. **Sometimes** invited by other children to join them in play, friendship, and work.

parents. The intent is not to supply a prescription for "correct social behavior," but rather to help teachers observe, understand, and support children as they grow in social skillfulness. If a child seems to be doing poorly on many of the items on the list, the adults responsible for his or her care can implement strategies that will help the child to establish more satisfying relationships with other children (Katz and McClellan, 1991).

Finally, it is also important to keep in mind that children vary in social behavior for a variety of reasons. Research indicates that children have distinct personalities and temperaments from birth. In addition, nuclear and extended family relationships obviously affect social behavior. What is appropriate or effective social behavior in one culture may be less effective in another culture. Children from diverse cultural and family backgrounds thus may need help in bridging their differences and in finding ways to learn from and enjoy the company of one another. Teachers have a responsibility to be proactive rather than laissez faire in creating a classroom community that is open, honest, and accepting.

This digest is adapted from the article, "Assessing the Social Development of Young Children. A Checklist of Social Attributes," which appeared in the Fall 1992 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood* (pp. 9-10).

For More Information

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